Interview with John A. Baker Jr.

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JOHN A. BAKER, JR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is September 23, 1992 and this is an interview with John A. Baker, Jr. which is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I wonder if you could give me a bit about your background—where you came from, were educated, interest in foreign affairs?

BAKER: I was born in Connecticut. My father was a mining engineer. My mother was a very active internationalist, interested in all kinds of international issues mainly from a humanitarian point of view. She was active in raising refugee relief after World War II and in the initial efforts regarding the United Nations. She was a delegate to the United Nations for a non-governmental organization. So I had a fair exposure growing up to international issues and was interested in them.

I went to high school in Westport, Connecticut, then to the Loomis Institute near Hartford and then to Yale, entering during World War II. In 1946, shortly after I was eighteen I was drafted into the Army. I spent two years in the Army, most of it as an infantry second lieutenant in Japan after completing the officer candidate school at Fort Benning.

I think that experience in Japan where one of my duties was to serve as regimental information officer and brief the regimental officers on international issues solidified my

interest in a career in international affairs. When I returned to Yale in 1948, I decided to complete a degree in international relations and try for the Foreign Service. And I did that. I finished my degree in 1949 and, after a summer job in France, took the exams in Paris in 1949 and about a year later, after a graduate year at Geneva's Institute of International Affairs, I was brought into the Foreign Service in 1950.

Q: Did you have a Foreign Service class when you came in?

BAKER: Oh, yes.

Q: Could you give a description for someone who wouldn't understand about what a class of 1950 was like, where the young officers came from and how they viewed the world?

BAKER: A number of things, I guess, would strike one as odd about that sort of a class. I thought it was a pretty high quality group of young people. They were all men. There must have been perhaps 18-20 of them. Quite a few of them went on to quite distinguished careers in the Foreign Service. A rather high proportion of them remained in the Foreign Service. I think maybe something over half of them or more stayed in the Foreign Service for most or all of their careers. Harry Barnes was in the group. Lew Hoffacker.

Q: I would assume that most of you came out of the military.

BAKER: I think probably almost everyone in that group had served in the military. Quite a few of them had active service during World War II.

Q: Do you think there was any general feeling about what you were going to do, your role? Here you were the new centurions of American foreign policy.

BAKER: I think we felt we were entering the Foreign Service at an important point in history. You recall that in November, 1950, we were at war in Korea. A number of us were wondering if we would get through our Foreign Service training and assignment before we

were recalled to active duty. For example, I was in the Reserves at the time and I think a number of others were. But I don't recall that any of us were picked up again.

You know that was also the time when NSC 68 was being completed and laid out, the old policy of confrontation, of containment of the Soviet Union, so I guess we saw ourselves engaged in the developing struggle between two systems. We were hoping to be on the front lines of that struggle, which we hoped would be diplomatic rather than military.

Q: Did you go from training into an assignment abroad?

BAKER: At that time the training period was about three months and in the last six weeks of that you got the afternoon off to work on whatever language they seemed to be pointing you towards. I volunteered to go to Yugoslavia and although not too many people were going to Communist countries on their first assignment, I had one qualification that they seemed to be interested in and that was that I was unmarried without children. At that time, hardly two years since the Tito/Stalin break, there was some concern as to what might happen in Yugoslavia. There were a lot of incidents on the frontier. The Soviets, using the satellite armed forces, were provoking a lot of tension there.

Q: This would be mostly Hungarian and Romanian.

BAKER: Yes. So the Department didn't seem to be anxious to put a lot of dependents at risk over there. So I lucked out and got the assignment I was looking for partly on that basis, but also on the basis that I had already had several years training in Russian at Yale and convinced them I could move quickly from there into Serbian.

Q: You got to Yugoslavia in 1951. How did you see Yugoslavia at that time?

BAKER: Well, Yugoslavia at that time, one sensed, was very much an authoritarian Communist state. Initially I was in the Hotel Moskva in the center of Belgrade. Small units of Yugoslav army troops would be periodically marching around and singing in loud voices

these “we are for Tito” type songs. One had the sense of a poor, proud, embattled country that was standing up for its nationhood, but not a country that was very democratically run. It was a tight shop politically.

Q: What was your job there?

BAKER: Well, I started out initially as a junior officer in the political section and I began to study the lengthy texts of people like Milovan Djilas who was beginning in a cloudy way to express some of his own ideas, which later, as they emerged, were dissenting ideas. Quite soon it appeared that, with the improvement of US-Yugoslav relations, it was more possible for Yugoslav citizens to leave the country and join their families in the US. So the consular section needed help and I was the replacement cog as the most junior officer in the embassy and sent to the consular section where I did some citizenship and a lot of visa work for four or five months.

It was a good experience in the sense that I immediately perceived that it was disadvantageous to have to interview these people through an interpreter. It was quite clear that the people being interviewed didn't quite trust the interpreter, who was an employee of the embassy, a local national, and I wasn't quite sure I trusted her either.

Q: Was that Madame Zhukov?

BAKER: Yes.

Q: She died while I was there. Madame Zhukov was the doyen of the consular section.

BAKER: She was of Russian descent and that was another problem in the sense...

Q: Incidentally, after her death, we found out she had been playing hanky-panky with some of the visa cases.

BAKER: My perception was that the sooner I could get her out of the middle of my discussions, the better off I would be. This gave me quite a stimulus to improve my knowledge of Serbo-Croatian and within about a month I began doing all my interviews myself. That got pretty tricky when the interviewee was Macedonian and a person who spoke a variant of the language isn't always easy to follow. But, anyway, I felt I got a sense of how the country worked from interviewing those people and finding out how they lived and what they did, how they lost their land, or what sort of situation they were up against in their community.

The tricky part of it was, you see, that almost all of them had, for one reason or other, joined some front of the Communist Party. To get your normal access to normal things it was pretty much what you had to do. So, for almost every one of those cases we had to ask for a waiver of the McCarran Act.

Q: A waiver from the Immigration Service because of affiliation to some forbidden organization.

BAKER: The McCarran Act didn't allow into the United States people who were Communists or belonged to front organizations. So one had to be sure that in recommending a person for a visa to join relatives in the United States any connection they had with the Party or front organizations was in a sense involuntary. It wasn't motivated by ideological conviction but by the need to get a ration card, etc.

I thought that that experience in the consular section was quite a formative one for me in beginning to understand how that system worked in the lower levels of society.

In the spring of 1951, I was out of the consular section for about six weeks because, by that time, the United States was delivering food aid to Yugoslavia. This was a controversial program because Yugoslavia was a Communist country, which had not been very friendly to the US, and had shot down a couple of US planes in 1947 without any particular

regrets. In 1950, when they had a bad drought, people generally perceived that the consequences of the drought were much worsened by the fact that the Yugoslavia Communist Party had carried out a very Draconian collectivization the year before.

The Titoists apparently were trying to prove to the rest of the world that they were better Communists than the Russians—pure Marxist-Leninists. In that 1948-49 period, they were not cozying up to the US, they were emphasizing their Marxism-Leninism and they managed to considerably screw up their agriculture and become very vulnerable to the 1950 drought. So by the fall of 1950, it was clear that they would not have enough food to get through to the next harvest.

The Department of State took a proposal to the Congress, with Truman's support, proposing that in order to sustain the Yugoslav heresy vis-a-vis the Communist Headquarters in Moscow, that a food aid program be granted. Congress agreed to that only on condition that a pack of US observers would be allowed into all parts of the country, with access everywhere, to see where this food was going, who was getting it, whether it was being identified as American food, etc. And that was done.

Most of these people came down from the Marshall Plan office in Paris and were assigned jeeps and interpreters since most of them had no experience in the country. They fanned out over the country. The one who had Macedonia suddenly had a heart attack in April, 1951, and the Embassy felt it was important that Congress be reassured that the whole thing was being tracked. I volunteered when I heard about this to go down to Macedonia and track the food aid. So that took me out of the consular section for a while.

Q: What was your impression of how this food distribution system worked in Macedonia which certainly at that time was a very primitive area?

BAKER: Yes, it was. My impression was that with the system we had set up it was very difficult to do much more than spot check the whole thing. As far as I was concerned, there could have been diversions of some of that food aid into military reserves, etc. and it would

have never come to my attention. All I could find out in each town where I was going was: Had they received food? Was it a town that was short of food? Were they getting the flour and was it labeled and identified as American flour? Were people, the man-in-the-street type people, getting it? And in most places I went they were. They didn't always know where it was coming from. A lot of officials down in Macedonia were still very Communist, even Stalinists, and not too happy with the idea that they were on the dole from the USA. So not in every case were they spreading the word that this was American assistance. But it did seem to be getting distributed. Again, I can't say whether it was getting 100 percent distributed.

Q: Were there at that time, because I know ten years later there were, a substantial number of former Yugoslav-American retirees in the area who sort of carried the flag around?

BAKER: Well there were places in Macedonia where you could encounter people who had been in the United States in the twenties and thirties and had returned. These were older men and they sat around the large town square and would reminisce about that a bit. For example, Bitolj, in southern Macedonia, has quite a collection of people with links to the United States that go back to the beginning of the century, long preceding the communization of Yugoslavia. They, of course, left that area while it was part of the Ottoman Empire, or at least their families did. And there were a few other places around Macedonia where you find that kind of community, but for the most part I didn't find that many.

Q: After finishing that, what were you doing at the Embassy?

BAKER: As I recall, I came back and worked some more in the consular section and then in the fall of 1951, a person was sent out who was in the consular corps and I went back and worked in what was a two-man political section. My supervisor, a fellow named Turner Cameron, was first secretary and head of the political section. He dealt mostly with the

international implications of the Yugoslav heresy and the US-Yugoslav relationship and agreements that were being developed. My job was to analyze and report on the internal politics of Yugoslavia.

Q: There were two things going here. One was the Djilas thing, his book, "New Class," which was a book on the whole Communist movement. Were you seeing aspects of that? Were you able to talk to Djilas? Was he still Vice President when you were there?

BAKER: Yes, he was. He was in the leading group. I think it was in the early part of 1952 that he began putting out a series of articles that were theoretical, a bit cloudy, but beginning to show some signs of working away from the standard Communist position. But at the time I was there he was still a member in good standing of the Politburo and considered to be along with Edvard Kardelj, the Foreign Minister, Alexander Rankovic, the Interior Minister, and Tito, himself, sort of the four core leaders of Yugoslavia.

Q: Did you have much contact with the political elements within Yugoslavia?

BAKER: Not a whole lot. They weren't terribly accessible and to the degree that we had dealings with the governmental leadership, that was done mostly by the Ambassador, who was George Allen, at the time, and the Deputy Chief of Mission, Jake Beam. And sometimes Turner Cameron. I occasionally would be taken along as a note taker for some meeting with the assistant secretary of the Foreign Ministry and one time with Kardelj, who was the Foreign Minister, but as a third secretary of the embassy, even in a normal country one wouldn't get a whole lot of access to the top political level.

I was getting my access mostly by getting out into the country. I would go out almost every weekend in an old converted jeep. In the fall, there would be these marvelous wedding feasts in the villages. You would appear in one of these villages and they would say, "Ah, you are an American" and everyone would be happy to see you. You would get a certain amount of contact with the normal Yugoslav citizen, particularly the farmer population, in those circumstances. And, of course, those people were not great admirers of communism

or Tito and when they loosened up a bit they would tell you about it. They had not much use for what was being done to Yugoslav agriculture and to their family prospects. So from those kinds of low level exposures, which I had a lot of, I developed a fairly skeptical assessment of the Yugoslav version of communism, even the sort of third world version that they began to develop in 1952.

Q: What about the fissures within that state? As we are speaking today in 1992 there is a full scale war going on between the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians. Did you see the fissures within that society?

BAKER: You certainly ran into it. It was just six or seven years after the war. You would hear, of course, what had happened to Serbs during the war at the hands of the Ustashi in Croatia. That was still a fresh memory. But nobody was organizing to do anything about it because in a Communist state like that you didn't organize. You kept your head down. So one didn't know what the potential depth or consequence of those feelings might be. I must say now, forty years later, it is kind of depressing to realize that even a generation that didn't experience those things has had that transmitted to it. That is not a very promising sign for the Balkans that memories are unbelievably long and bitter. My own personal experience was mostly in Serbia and the trip to Macedonia, so my familiarity with the culture of the country was primarily familiarity with the Serbian outlook. I occasionally went up to Zagreb and I spent the summer of 1951 in Bled, about a month of it, as bag carrier for the Ambassador who went up to Bled to be near Tito, who spent the summer at his castle up there in Bled. So I got a little exposure to the Slovenes who have a very different culture and are a different kind of people. They are more like what you are used to encountering in the rural parts of Central Europe. A more rational, less passionate type of people.

Q: What about George Allen as Ambassador. At the time how did he operate?

BAKER: I liked George Allen. He had already been Ambassador a couple of other places such as Iran. He was an experienced man and conducted the high level business of the Embassy without much reference to people like myself unless he needed a note taker or somebody to carry his bag for him to some event. Socially, he was quite forthcoming. It was a small embassy. We were invited out to the residence on Saturday afternoons in the summer to play badminton. I had a pleasant social acquaintance with George Allen, but didn't have any day-to-day working contact with him.

Q: How about Jake Beam who later became a distinguished ambassador in a number of places?

BAKER: I saw more of Jake. He was, as usually is the case in an embassy of that kind, the guy who ran the embassy in a management sense. I enjoyed Jake. We had a little picnic group that used to go out on Sundays and I was pleased to be included in that pretty regularly with Jake and with Peg Glasford—Admiral Glasford's daughter—who was at that time our USIA officer who subsequently married Jake and went to Moscow with him—and Turner Cameron and one or two other people. We would go out on Sunday picnics which were memorable. There was always a good conversation and a lot of laughs at those events.

But, again, most of my working contact was with my immediate supervisor who was Turner Cameron and while I was in the consular section with Arnie Hettberg, an experienced career consular officer. I regarded that as sort of normal as a junior officer.

Q: Just to sort of catch the spirit of the times, what was your impression of the Soviet threat in this 1951-52 period?

BAKER: Well, I think we were continually aware of the incidents that took place on the frontiers of Yugoslavia and often one or two people would be killed or wounded in these incidents. They appeared to be designed to pressure and destabilize Yugoslavia as part

of what was then the Cominform campaign against the Yugoslav dissidence. I think that, as long as Stalin lived, he hoped to be able to unseat Tito and put into power people who would be responsive to his leadership. But as time went on in 1951 and into 1952, it seemed to us that this wasn't going to escalate particularly. It was more a harassment and pressure campaign than a prelude to any significant military action.

Of course, we knew there was no major mobilization going on in Hungary or Bulgaria. And in early 1952, we moved in the direction of drawing Yugoslavia towards NATO and establishing a military mission there. By staking out that sort of a presence I think it was made clear that we weren't going to be indifferent to what happened to Yugoslavia. Of course, Yugoslavia had no intention of joining NATO, but they did join what was then called the Balkan Pact. That was a Pact with Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. And Greece and Turkey, being members of NATO, sort of then hooked Yugoslavia into that system. I forget when the Yugoslavs moved out of that Pact. I suppose it was some time after the 1956 Congress when they were reconciling with Khrushchev and when it was clear that the new Soviet leadership was not going to move militarily against them.

But in 1952, you know, it was clear that they were moving tentatively into the American and West European security sphere.

Q: You left Belgrade in 1952 and came back to Washington?

BAKER: Actually I left Belgrade in July, 1952 because I was unfortunate enough to get in the way of a fluoroscope which discovered that I had some kind of spot on my lung. This may have been a consequence of living in that country. I was sent up to Munich and was diagnosed as having tuberculosis. Even though it wasn't a very raging variant, it was a rather stubborn one and I was out of the Service for almost a year and a half because of that. Nowadays, with that kind of spot on one's lung, one could just handle that with certain kinds of medication and keep on doing what you are doing and it would take care of it,

but then they didn't have that and the gentle approach of curing the disease was a rather lengthy sanitarium stay.

So I didn't get back into business until early 1954. And that was a rather curious way to reconnect because in 1953, as you may remember, the McCarthy investigations were in full swing going after the Voice of America. That was a nice target for McCarthy and his people because a lot of these people were fairly new American citizens who had come after the war and were broadcasting and writing script for Voice of America. The Voice wanted people fairly fresh out of the area because their language would be more up to date with the listeners, but they were either not yet citizens or new citizens and very vulnerable to and frightened by the kinds of intrigue that developed around the McCarthy investigation.

Not surprisingly, in the case of the Yugoslav Service of the Voice, it was a field day for the Serbs who wanted to denounce Croats and Croats who wanted to denounce Serbs. By the time they were through they had compromised the Service Chief, who as far as I know was in no way a Communist or close to it, and a bunch of other people and the Service was decimated gradually by these investigations and dismissals.So the Voice of America asked the State Department if they could come up with a candidate to run the Service who had no political history that was worth looking into but who knew Serbo-Croatian and something about the country. Well at that time I was about 26 years old—not old enough to have any political history—and I did know Serbo-Croatian because I had been there and was coming back to duty, so the Department asked me if I would take this assignment to the Voice of America to run and restore the broadcasting to Yugoslavia for the Voice of America. I agreed to do that.It was at that time in New York. I was brought up in Connecticut so it was kind of convenient to go home for weekends and things like that. I started this job and it was sort of a colorful situation. Running the Russian Service was a fantastic guy named Alexander Barmine, who was a former intelligence general in the Soviet Army who defected just before the war. He was a real bear of a man and possessed of definite views. We had a policy meeting every morning on how the events of

the day might be interpreted. The US Information Agency was just being formed then and was looking over the process with some anxiety because of the investigations. The policy officer in the Voice of America at that time was Barry Zorthian who later became famous as the public affairs officer in Vietnam. Barry would preside over the policy meeting and Barmine would have at him. I would occasionally look for openings because it was quite clear often that neither policy line that might be appropriate for Western Europe or the policy line that might be appropriate for the Soviet world usually fit my audience. So I was always looking for an opportunity to get a little elbow room so that I could make broadcasts and commentaries and press coverage that would be more relevant to this rather distinct audience that was neither Soviet nor free world. That proved to be an interesting game. I found the Voice an interesting assignment. I worked there directly under two Foreign Service officers in sequence: King, and Jack Armitage, who in turn reported to a witty Viennese, Bob Bever, European Division chief and on up to Gene King, the Program Manager, famous as the voice of the “shadow”.

I had a piece of luck in the spring of 1954 because Radio Free Europe was starting up just down the street, on 57th street, in New York. It was the beginning of the Eisenhower Administration and Radio Free Europe was sort of the symbol of the rollback that the 1952 Eisenhower campaign and later John Foster Dulles' initial policy thrust had emphasized.

Q: That is to restore it to democracy.

BAKER: Yes.

Q: They didn't explain how they were going to do it.

BAKER: Well, one of the ways they were going to do it was to create what would be the equivalent to an indigenous radio station and this would not be like the Voice of America, something that would explain America and broadcast regular international news, but a program that would be focused on internal developments of each of those countries. And, of course, Radio Free Europe at that time had other tricks up its sleeves like sending

balloons over Eastern Europe with pamphlets. That sort of thing kind of died down after the initial enthusiasm, but Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, broadcasting to the Soviet Union, got firmly established and created audiences and staffs and began to progress.

Well, at the outset they were thinking of establishing a broadcasting service for Yugoslavia because the initial view was that Yugoslavia was another Communist state and needed a free radio also. Well, once the new administration got into power and began to look at the relationship with Yugoslavia and this rather delicate game we were playing trying to stabilize a non-Soviet Communist state, it was quite quickly concluded that this type of broadcasting would not really serve the purposes of that policy.

Radio Free Europe had gathered a rather experienced nucleus of a Yugoslavia broadcasting service including a guy who had worked for BBC during the war as a commentator, and a guy who had been an editor of a newspaper in Belgrade. So I walked down the street and went into Radio Free Europe and met these guys who were wringing their hands over the fact that they weren't going to have a service for Radio Free Europe. I began to talk to them about coming to work for the Voice of America. I was able to rebuild the Yugoslav Broadcasting Service essentially around that nucleus of talent that the Radio Free Europe people had preassembled and precleared.

Q: Had the Yugoslav Service been pretty well cleaned out because of the internal politics?

BAKER: When I got there the Service chief had already gone and several other people who I never met, and there were investigations in process against two people who were still there. I got acquainted with them and they seemed to me to be respectable people, but I was unable to do anything about the inexorable progress of those investigations and they also were...

Q: Was this everybody accusing everybody else for being a Communist because they didn't agree with them? This is so Balkan.

BAKER: I, of course, was never allowed to see what was in the files, who had charged who with what. That was all supposed to be the business of the all-knowing security officers. All I could do was say, “Look, this guy is a talented person and I have no reason to believe he is not loyal to the United States. I would like to keep him in the Service if at all possible and I would like to have some understanding why that is not possible.” Well, I never got any explanation and after a couple of tries it was made pretty clear to me that I was obviously not in the know about all the stuff that was relevant. Well, I was never very convinced that what they had in the files was all that reliable.

Q: Back to Alexander Barmine because he is a fascinating character and I don't think much is known about him. Here he was a man of very strong views about how to treat the Soviet Union news and all that. What was he pushing for?

BAKER: When we were doing editorial commentary in the Voice of America about Soviet policies, because of the almost total confrontation at that time, he generally wanted to take a tougher line than the policy people were ready to go with. Often there was a line that was nuanced in some way for whatever diplomatic reasons and that's what you get in government radio. The government looks over the shoulder of the radio broadcasters who then have to program reasons of state into what goes out. I have seen this on the other end of the problem in the Department of State when some diplomat from a foreign country comes in and complains about what is on our radio broadcasts.

So there is always that tension between the interests of the government and the interests of a broadcaster. Barmine, as a committed broadcaster, was out on the edge of that confrontation. I have come to believe that confrontation or tension between the government and the press is inevitable and probably healthy, but it doesn't work very well

inside the government because when you have government media and a government overseer you sort of tilt the balance there because the government has all the cards.

Q: You must have had a real problem because obviously we were taking a hard line, anti-Communist stand. This was our main confrontation and yet here you were along with many people which went on for several decades who did not want to destabilize Tito, who was a Communist but because there were fears that if Yugoslavia went it could turn into another one of those Balkan wars that would drag in all the European powers, and with good reason looking at the situation as it is today. How did you work this? You must have done a lot of cutting and watching to make sure we were not giving the same message we were giving to East Germany to Yugoslavia.

BAKER: I had to really develop as much as possible our own program and a lot of the features that were produced for use throughout the Voice of America I could not use and did not use. So that meant I had to create my own and encourage people in the staff to do that, although they were at first quite fearful because they were afraid that if it was their own work somebody would pillory them with it in some future round of investigation. But these new people I brought in from Radio Free Europe had not been present during this shattering experience of the McCarthy investigations so they had a little more courage and also had more journalistic experience.

One of them, a man named Grga Zlatoper, was a very talented commentator who had broadcast commentary for the BBC into Yugoslavia throughout the war. I gradually convinced the managers of the Voice that he should go on the air as a named commentator under his own name. That meant that I had to go over each time before he went on the air what he had in his script. He would take some of the house material on the issues of the day and work some of his own ideas and some commentary from the American press and create, in my mind, a much more appropriate commentary for our audience. He, I think, really built the audience for our Service. Eventually he became Service chief.

Q: How did you present divisions within our country—Democrat, Republican, Pro and Anti-McCarthy, etc.?

BAKER: One way we did that was by broadcasting press reviews. We would have a couple times a week a program in which we would excerpt editorials from the American press around different themes, so we could show the different opinions that were coming out in the country through the voice of the different American newspapers. That way we were able to illustrate relevant views of American opinion leaders without taking an official stand on them. We let the press speak through us on certain issues.

I also had members of the staff who wanted directly or indirectly to address internal issues in Yugoslavia. We always had to do this rather obliquely. One of the people was a clever writer and he developed a weekly program about a party leader in a small district. It was a series of rather amusing incidents and gaffs that bedeviled the life of this party leader. It was never clear whether we were talking about a party leader of the Soviet Union, or Bulgaria or where. This particular story didn't have a fixed locus, so in that way it made it difficult for anybody from the Yugoslav government to complain about it because if they did one could say, “Is that shoe fitting your foot? We didn't realize that it was necessarily your people that were depicted.”

We fooled around a little bit with stuff like that to stimulate listener interest.

One thing that stimulates them to this day, I think, was that every Saturday night we broadcast a little jazz program by Willis Conover. Willis Conover became a well known name throughout Eastern Europe for his recorded jazz program.

Q: Did you get any feedback from Yugoslavia?

BAKER: Rather little. I guess people were hesitant still to identify themselves as listeners through mail which they had reason to believe would be censored. But at the end of my service at the Voice of America, in the summer of 1956, on my way to my next

assignment, I did a five or six week listener survey in Yugoslavia. I went there and drove around the country and talked to people in government, the press and in the street about Voice of America broadcasts, whether they listened and what they liked. I made a full report of those findings to the Voice by mail from my next assignment.

Q: What was the impression that you got from your conversations?

BAKER: I would say that in terms of getting to them international news that was relevant and timely and well presented, we probably never caught up to the BBC. But because we were broadcasting from America, because America in the fifties was where it was at in terms of power and influence, people wanted to hear from Washington. So we had an audience that was built on that and strengthened I think significantly by Grga Zlatoper, whose commentaries were very much respected and listened to. I got very favorable playback on the commentaries and press reviews and things that he did daily on the Service at that time.

Q: Why did the BBC have a stronger listener appeal for the news? I know when I was overseas I would tend to turn to the BBC rather than the Voice of America.

BAKER: I don't know. I think they just do a very good job. As you say, I often listened to BBC. If you were in Europe it often seemed that BBC had a more sensitive ear as to what news stories in Europe were most relevant to where you were and presented often more insights on them than you got in the American news items. They have a long tradition of professionalism in news broadcasting. At that time the Voice of America probably hadn't caught up to it yet.

Q: When you left the Yugoslav Service of the Voice of America, you did what?

BAKER: I was assigned to the US Consulate General in Munich, but actually posted to Oberammergau where the US Army had established what was called Detachment R, which sounds rather spooky but was really a two year course taught entirely by Soviet

defectors. There was nothing classified taught in this course because none of the people giving it had any access to any. They were giving the course in Oberammergau because most of them, because of the McCarran Act, couldn't come to the United States, having been Communists in various parts of the Soviet Union.

In this sort of sanitized environment in a pretty little town in southern Bavaria, I attended one year of this two year course that the Army had established. That course was taught entirely in Russian. We asked our questions in Russian and did our exams in Russian. So it was excellent preparation both linguistically and substantively for an assignment to Moscow which I was aspiring to and to which at the end of that year I got. It was on the way to that assignment in Oberammergau that I did the audience survey in Yugoslavia.

Q: You served in Moscow in 1957-58?

BAKER: Yes, I went there in June, 1957, after an interesting month that I had spent in Spain at the request of the State Department which had pulled me out of the Soviet area program. The assignment in Spain was to interview the children of the Spanish Civil War who had been taken to Russia as the Civil War was ending in northern Spain. Many of them had been orphaned and as orphans of heroes of the Spanish Republic campaigns, which the Soviets had heavily supported, they were protected citizens in Russia. When the war started they moved out to Central Asia but were never allowed to return to Spain until 1956 when they were given that option. Most of them took the option together with their Russian wives and husbands and came back to Spain. They were one of the first sociological samples that we had of what living in the Soviet Union was like so an interview project was set up. Since I spoke Russian and Spanish, I was asked to participate in that.

Q: What was your impression of this group?

BAKER: They had lived in very difficult circumstances, although probably not any more difficult than the rest of the Soviet population during and after the war. Many of them, particularly the women, probably had gotten better educational and professional

opportunities in the Soviet system than they might have in Spain. In Franco Spain, having been children and orphans of Republican heroes might have somewhat limited their opportunities.

They came back to Spain, even those of them who had become chemists and engineers, primarily for Spanish reasons, I concluded. They were Spaniards. They kept on feeling like they were Spaniards even though they were in the Soviet Union. In spite of the fact that most of their adolescence and young adulthood was spent in the Soviet system, they felt like Spaniards and they came back to Spain. Some of them had a rough adjustment, particularly the women, because in the mid-fifties a professional woman in Spain was a rarity. But they were not regretting their decision. They had some respect for the opportunities they had in Russia but a lot of the same kind of discontent with the authoritarian nature of the system that the Russians had as well. I think they also felt they had never really been fully accepted into that society. They had always been regarded as foreigners, different, and maybe not to be totally trusted.

Q: Then you went to Moscow.

BAKER: I got there in June, 1957 just about the time when Khrushchev was dealing with the anti-Party group.

Q: He had already made his 20th Party speech denouncing Stalin and all that. The repercussions must have still been going on.

BAKER: Of course the repercussions of that speech in February, 1956, I had already encountered somewhat in southern Germany and Austria in the fall of 1956 because the Budapest events in the fall of 1956 were certainly a repercussion. There were Hungarians who were roaring through southern Germany back into Budapest to help the people there. A month or two later there were people trying to help them cross the border to escape the Russian reprisal. So by the time I got to Russia the Russian leadership had been somewhat sobered by the consequences of this secret speech at the 20th Congress.

They were retrenching a bit. Khrushchev was under pressure both for his initiatives at the Party Congress which had these dangerous, for them, consequences in Eastern Europe, but even more for the reforms he was trying to carry out in the Soviet administration, particularly the administration of industry.

He was creating councils of national economy, giving more local power to bureaucrats in the provinces and republics and less power to the people in the ministries in Moscow. Those were the people who had basically come up through the Moscow Party ranks and formed the basic support of Molotov and Malenkov. They were the people who that group relied on in their effort to unseat Khrushchev in June, 1957. It was these newly empowered people from the provinces around the country who Khrushchev and Zhukov brought in by airplane to the Central Committee who rescued Khrushchev from an adverse vote in the Soviet Politburo.

Q: You were in Moscow when this happened?

BAKER: I arrived in Moscow just afterwards. I was assigned to the political section to analyze Soviet foreign policy. I was interminably analyzing the Soviet press for clues about changes in foreign policy. It was kind of a deadly job. I had to read about seven or eight newspapers a day and produce a telegram that summarized what was significant in them about Soviet foreign policy. It struck me as a kind of bizarre thing to be doing because you could get those same papers back to the research people in Washington within a few days and they could do it probably better. But just to get maybe 48 hours jump...

Q: Sort of being one up or showing you are on top of it for the embassy.

BAKER: That's what it struck me as doing and it just seemed to me, having been trained to be able to move around and talk to people, not to be the best use of my skills.

Consequently I went out, whenever I wasn't poring through these papers, and did things and met people and had some rather unusual experiences, the consequence of which was being expelled from Russia at the end of my first year.

Q: Before we come to that, what about the Embassy? What was the spirit, how did Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson operate?

BAKER: Llewellyn Thompson operated with his cards very close to his chest. Apparently he is a very good poker player. The press used to play poker with him and had a lot of respect for his abilities in that regard. He was a quiet person. He didn't glad hand much with the staff. We had very little contact with him. Neither he nor his wife did a lot of outreach to the staff socially. That was left to the Deputy Chief of Mission, Richard Davis and his wife, Harriet. Harriet Davis was sort of the den mother to the Embassy, more than the Ambassador's wife, Jane Thompson. It was a good embassy. I enjoyed serving in embassies in the Communist countries because you had the sense of working in conditions of adversity and on the front lines of the Cold War. You had colleagues of high quality because I think the Department tried to send people of high quality to those posts.

Q: That was certainly my experience in Belgrade. It was the best group of people I ever served with.

BAKER: So, to me, in terms of working atmosphere and working personal relationships, it was a real high. Those were good people. David Mark was the political counselor. The political section had Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs sections. Morrie Rothenberg, who had a long career in INR and had been Wristonized, was heading the Foreign Affairs section. In that section with me was Ted Eliot who had come up after a year of doing the admin work in the Embassy. Ted was later Ambassador to Afghanistan and Executive Secretary to the Department. These were, I thought, first rate people. We got along well, had fun together. We had fun with our British counterparts, the Canadians, the French, etc.

There wasn't any significant social life with the Russians because a Russian wouldn't want to risk socializing with the Americans.

Q: Did you get involved at all with the Soviet bureaucracy?

BAKER: Not very much. I guess the only people in the Embassy who got involved with them were the people in the Administrative or Consular sections. I went rarely to the Foreign Ministry because we didn't have even that much contact with the Foreign Ministry and what we did have was handled by the Ambassador or the DCM or the chief of the political section. So I had virtually no interaction with the Soviet bureaucracy, except when I went on a field trip of some kind and then I would attempt to call up various local authorities to gather information about that area. That was generally fairly unsatisfactory.

I found most of the standard information I got about that society was a result of accidental one-time exposures. Sitting down next to somebody in a crowded restaurant where the waiter would put you at a table that was already partially occupied. Or sitting next to someone on a plane or a train or in a theater, or at the university.

Those occasions were really extraordinary because often you would feel that the person you were talking to soon realized that you were an American and thought this was the one chance to say everything that he might want to say to an American. It was a chance to say things he wouldn't even say to his neighbor because he couldn't trust him. So you often had a two-hour conversation of the most extraordinary intimacy with somebody you had never met before and who you would never see again. They knew and you knew that they might be able to explain that conversation on the grounds that the guy was sitting next to him, but how would you explain going back for another conversation? You couldn't. If you went back to see that American diplomat you must of been working something against the interests of the Soviet state. So there was that sense that everything had to be said, communicated and exchanged...

Q: What type of things would the discussion evolve around?

BAKER: Often very personal tales of their own experience of great hardship, hardship of their families, losses in their families, pressure by the authorities of one kind of another, often many questions about the United States, on the one hand illustrating that they had been infected by Soviet propaganda, but on the other hand illustrating that they didn't trust it and they wanted to check it against another source.

Q: In your analysis of Soviet foreign policy, how did you see the threat to the West from the Soviet Union?

BAKER: In the fall of 1957, there was a big conclave of all the Communist parties on the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution and that produced a heavily negotiated document about the purposes and goals of the international Communist movement. It was one of the first documents that attempted to do that. It was significant because the Chinese were there and because East Europeans, after these tumultuous events of 1956, were there and because the Yugoslavs were there, beginning to be pulled back into the system but not being sure they wanted to.

That document, I think, illustrated the ambitious intentions of the international Communist movement as led by the Soviets and, significantly, it began to open up the attack on revisionism—revisionism being the kind of thing that happened in Hungary and Poland, but also the Yugoslav variant. So the Yugoslavs didn't sign on to this, or at least not all of it because they could see that the international Communist movement was pulling back away from the promises of the 20th Congress of a more co-existing, open approach to the rest of the world and more tolerance within the international Communist movement.

So this sort of retrenchment was occurring. I don't think we understood fully at the time all the reasons why it was occurring. One of the important reasons, in retrospect, was the Sino-Soviet relationship. The Chinese under Mao were disturbed by what happened

in 1956 and they were trying to push the Soviets back towards a more orthodox and confrontational stance vis-a-vis the US. And sure enough in the winter of 1957-58, not only did you have these increasing signs of tightening up within the system with the anti-revisionist drive, but you also had the launch of a campaign vis-a-vis the West in Berlin. That was Khrushchev's declaration that the anomalous situation in Berlin would have to be somehow changed or resolved, or else. It was never very clear what “or else” would be, but it was somewhat menacing and Khrushchev, being a man of temperament, had a way of occasionally adopting a menacing posture.

So that was the atmosphere of that winter. We had seen in the summer of 1957 a sort of benign face of the Soviet system in the form of the First Moscow Youth Festival, where they had really gone all out to make Moscow appear the capital of the Socialist, and not only the Socialist but the non-capitalist world, and it was heavily oriented towards the third world. There were a lot of Africans, and Asians and some Latin Americans there. It really looked like a bid to establish a Communist movement as the leader of the underprivileged of the earth which would eventually encircle the small developed societies grouped around the United States and Europe.

It was run, for Russia, in a very open way. Russian young people had an opportunity that they never had before to meet all these people and to talk freely to them, pretty much. That really blew their minds. So in a way, it had a reverse effect.

I had a chance to experience that because I had a rather unusual experience in that year of 1957-58. In the early fall of 1957 the Embassy got a telegram from the Department saying, “A couple of Russian diplomats have applied to George Washington University.” This was the first time that had happened. The Department's general message was: It probably is a healthy thing and we don't have any real way of obstructing that. Washington is not a closed city. George Washington is not a closed university so if they pay the tuition...what do we do? But we want to keep things reciprocal. We want to say to the

Russians, “Yeah, sure those guys can go there, but that means there has to be access to Moscow University for some of our diplomats.”

So I raised my hand. I didn't want to spend all my time reading the newspapers. I volunteered to go to Moscow University. I had an idea what I might want to do there because I had made some inquiries during the Youth Festival about the history faculty and I had identified a course which I thought sounded quite innocuous and would not frighten anybody that I was taking this course.

We sent a note to the Foreign Ministry saying that Second Secretary John Baker wants to apply to Moscow University and we would appreciate the support and cooperation of the Ministry. Eventually, and it took them about a month to deal with this unusual idea, they gave me the go ahead and I went to the University and saw the Dean and was allowed to attend this one course which was called, “History of the Soviet Union in the Feudal Period.” What it really was was a history of the different peoples of the Soviet Union, their respective feudal areas, but they didn't want to say history of Russia because that would be too great Russia. It was a history mostly of Russia but also some lectures on some of the other nationalities from about 800 AD down to the beginning of the 19th century. The professor was fairly good. I went there once a week. They wouldn't give me a student pass because they didn't want me roaming around the buildings, but they would let me in on my own recognizance every Friday morning and I would attend this two-hour lecture.

The students immediately identified me as an American and in the wake of the Youth Festival they thought the fact that I was at the University must make me fair game, that maybe I was some kind of an American leftist, or what have you. I fairly soon identified myself as to what I was and what I was doing. That cooled some of them, but not all of them, particularly not those who were organizing the history faculty's basketball team. I am about 6'4” and played basketball in school and at the University of Geneva in Switzerland, so I agreed to play as long as there was no objection by the administration. So I went out and practiced for about a month with the history faculty's basketball team and got to

know these young guys. Partied a little bit with them. Even had some of them come over to my house and listen to records. Sometimes when we got an American hockey team or basketball team in town I would get a few extra tickets. So in a fairly innocuous way I developed a set of acquaintances there which was interesting. Obviously they had no secrets they could share with me other than their personal lives, but it gave me an insight into the society which was unusual.

Eventually the Dean told me that I couldn't play basketball for the history faculty. Clearly I was a revisionist influence on the court! It was put on the fairly legitimate grounds that I wasn't a full time student. I kept up these connections but over the winter the anti-revisionist campaign developed and penetrated the University and I began to be increasingly isolated. The people who I had been friendly with in the fall began to tell me that it was not going to be healthy for them to continue to chat with me.

I had been going to parties occasionally over at the Lenin Hills dorms. Of course, these were never parties in the rooms of Russian students who would be compromised by that. It was all set up so that the hosts would be Egyptians or Syrians, who were very much in vogue at that time and seemed to be willing to stage interminable parties as long as anybody else would provide the vodka. I was barely turning 30 and a lot of these students were in their middle twenties and this was a cheerful and interesting experience. Obviously I was being surveyed all this time and therefore the people who were talking to me eventually were contacted and told to lay off. So by the late winter I wasn't seeing a whole lot of these guys going to class. In May I went on leave to London with my wife and while we were in England, the Embassy contacted me and called me and told me that I had been thrown out of the Soviet Union and couldn't go back. This got a little press coverage. There was protest by the US Embassy. The Charg#, Dick Davis, went in and demanded an explanation. They said that I had violated the norms of diplomatic behavior. Dick said, “What norms had he violated to make sure we don't violate it again?” They said, “Ask Mr. Baker to search his conscience.”

Q: Isn't that nice.

BAKER: So I have been searching my conscience since 1958 as to what norms I might have violated. But clearly the norms I violated would not be violable norms in any normal country. I was simply getting more exposure to the Soviet citizenry than was convenient for the authorities and they finally wanted to put a stop to it.

Q: Now it is almost an exquisite ballet of tic for tat. Did a Soviet diplomat get kicked out then?

BAKER: Yes. I don't know to this day whether this was in response to my being kicked out or whether this particular Soviet diplomat had been identified and was known by the Soviets to be about to be thrown out when they threw me out, so that they could make it look like a retaliation. Subsequently, on one or two occasions later in my career when we tried to test the waters as to whether I could return on another assignment, the answer always was, “Yeah, you can return but only if one of ours gets to return.” Since most of the Soviet diplomats who were thrown out here were for espionage, that deal was never made.

Q: Just to get a feel for your personal reaction and maybe those around you, after all you had devoted a great deal of time to your Russian training and all and to go there for such a short time and be told “no more,” careerwise this is sort of a blow isn't it?

BAKER: Yes, I thought it was quite a blow. A blow from several respects. I had been abroad just two years, one year in Germany and one in Russia, and I had hoped to be abroad at least five years in a couple of assignments and get through the period while we were having young children and use some of the good help you could get overseas. But when I dropped suddenly onto the hands of the personnel system they couldn't drop me into another appropriate European assignment, so I was brought back to the States. That was not very convenient because I had a young son and another on the way.

Secondly, I was dropped into an assignment which didn't look all that promising from a career standpoint. But, it turned out that I was able to make something of it that was kind of interesting.

Q: What was the assignment? You served in Washington from 1958-60.

BAKER: Yes. I served in the Bureau of Public Affairs and at that time it was something called the Office of Policy Coordination. That office did several things. It tried to coordinate policy speeches throughout the government that were on foreign affairs. I didn't do much of that. The other thing was to try to coordinate public affairs events, programs that related to the Communist world and I did quite a lot of that.

And thirdly, it had a relationship to some of the programs of the Central Intelligence Agency that were being carried out at that time with youth movements around the world. In 1968 “Ramparts” exposed...

Q: A magazine sort of from the left.

BAKER: ...all this, in particular the fact that the National Students Association of the United States had been in touch with and in some cases collaborated with CIA programs aimed towards politically significant student groups abroad. Running this program in CIA were several former National Students Association leaders. I was the liaison in the State Department for that.

One of the things they wanted to do was to impact the first Communist Youth Festival that was going to be staged outside the Communist Bloc, in Vienna. So in 1959—them had these things every two years—there was a Youth Festival in Vienna. There was a certain interest developed in that and a certain program that would assure that the American presence at that Festival would not only be selected left-wingers and fellow travelers, but would get some real normal Americans there. So a group was spun out of the National

Students Association to do that. A rather interesting person agreed to lead that group to the Festival, Gloria Steinem.

Q: For the historical record you might explain who she is.

BAKER: Gloria Steinem subsequently became one of the leaders of the feminist movement in the United States, as well as a successful magazine editor. She was a very intelligent woman with a lot of personal charm. She did a bang-up job at this effort. I was sort of the interface with it.

I did other things in that job. For example, I went around the country with the Khrushchev visit.

Q: He came to visit Eisenhower.

BAKER: Yes. I looked after the Soviet press accompanying Khrushchev. And I went around the country with the first delegation of Soviet writers that came here, which was an interesting experience.

I drafted a speech for Nixon when he opened the American Exhibit in Moscow.

Q: Oh, yes, this was the kitchen debate with Khrushchev. Nixon was Vice President at the time.

BAKER: The speech he made at the opening of that exhibition was one I worked on and I briefed him at his home before he went over there. And I wrote one of the speeches that Eisenhower would have made had he gone to Russia in return for the Khrushchev visit, but the Gary Powers U2 spy plane event blew that. The speech was published at Columbia but never made.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet press corps and all when they came to the United States?

BAKER: It was kind of pathetic. One of the things we wanted to do since we had all these newsmen and they were going around the country, was to get them into individual encounters that might relate to their particular readership. If it was an agricultural paper, we would try to set up interviews with people in the agricultural area, etc. We offered them these various ancillary opportunities but their only interest at that time was to stay close to their press briefing officer. Khrushchev had a competent press briefer and there was Khrushchev's son-in-law who was kind of an obstreperous guy, Alex Adzubey. Those were the people who they wanted to get the Party line from so that they would know what to write. So the whole business of trying to expose them more broadly to the country and therefore their readership didn't really take because they didn't have the latitude or imagination to pick up on it. But it was an opportunity to participate in that sort of barnstorming trip.

Q: What was our impression of Khrushchev at that time? Was he a dangerous person, someone with whom we could deal, was he an elemental force or what?

BAKER: I think he was all those things. He was somebody with whom you could deal, but he was also dangerous in the sense that he was sort of mercurial, and he was an elemental force, a very earthy guy, rather crude in many respects. He fairly grubby jokes and poked his finger in your chest and banged his shoe on the lectern in the UN. He was not a smooth and polished chief of government or chief of state. This was partly his downfall because some of the more traditional types in the leadership eventually felt it was too dangerous to have a mercurial, elemental force of that kind loose in one of the most powerful countries at the very top level. And, as you know, he was accused of adventurism and all.

The whole Cuban exercise was a fairly dangerous plan.

Q: The Cuban Missile Crisis in October, 1962. It was THE real confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States.

BAKER: So, he was capable of that kind of risky business. But on the other hand, compared to his peers he was a force for reform in the Soviet system. In fact, Gorbachev, when he finally got around to trying to do things harked back to that and pulled back into the picture some of the people who had worked with Khrushchev on those partial reforms. Khrushchev never wanted to abandon Communism, but he wanted to make it work better and he thought he had some ideas as to how to do that. They were obviously ideas that stepped on a lot of people's toes and perhaps broke their rice bowls, I don't know.

Q: Another figure you met and obviously came involved with was Nixon. Here you are a relatively junior officer briefing the Vice President. How did that go?

BAKER: I went out to his house here in the NW area. At that time there wasn't a Vice Presidential mansion, he had his own house. He had one or two other people with him. One was a cleric, I think, from Georgetown who he had asked to give him some ideas as well. He received me in a very gracious way, obviously trying to put me at ease. He asked me questions and seemed to listen to what I was saying when I answered them. It was not an intimidating encounter in any way. I felt that I was doing something useful and being heard out.

Q: One last thing on this period. With these encounters, did you feel that the CIA was kind of nudging or pushing you concerning their backing of National Students Association?

BAKER: No, I thought what they were doing was generally in the US interest. There has been discussion since that time as to whether that sort of thing had to be done clandestinely. Now, of course, you have organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy which does very much those same kinds of things but it is all overt. I guess my mind set was that for some of those things it is more comfortable all around if they are covert. I guess the most obvious extreme of all of this is when you have a diplomatic mission in Managua and you are supporting the Contras who are trying to overthrow the

government to which you have got accreditation. If you are doing all that right out in the open, it seems to me, a little bizarre.

One of the things that was being done at that time, which I think was constructive...the National Students Association was bringing over here some of the leaders of the Algerian Youth Movement. At that time, the Algerian War was still on. The French government looked rather askance at the idea that some of these young leaders who were on the other side of the barricades were coming to the United States and being well received by student organizations. As it turned out, the war ended a year or two later and these people became the leaders of Algeria and we had through this program a certain link to them. The National Student Association couldn't carry out a program like that without help and they got it, but it was not overt. It was quiet help which helped to establish a new link which was valuable for the future. It would have been an embarrassing diplomatic situation had it been overt.

Q: Why don't we stop here and I'll get back.

Today is November 23, 1992 and this is a continuing interview with John A. Baker, Jr.

BAKER: I recall that I was about to leave for Italy when we ended our last discussion. There was one particular aspect of my tour in Italy, maybe two, which might be worth commenting on.

My job there was in the political section. I was a second secretary. My job was to look after the left side of the Italian political spectrum. The left side included rather substantially the Communist Party of Italy, which at that time had about a quarter of the vote and a corresponding number of seats in parliament. The Socialist Party, headed by Nenni, had up until the mid-fifties, the Hungarian Revolution, been rather tight with the Communists in a sort of common front. They had about 10-12 percent of the vote. Then there were the Social Democrats headed by Saragat, a small party that had broken from the Socialists back in the forties. They broke over the issue of working with the Communists. They

were people who wanted to support a Social Democratic outlook, but not to team up with the Communists the way the rest of the Socialist did. Then there was a Republican Party headed by Ugo LaMaifa, who was quite a seasoned politician and expert on budgetary and financial matters in the parliament. So those were the parties I looked after.I also had to look after the far right of the spectrum which were the monarchists and the neo-Fascists. I didn't really spend a lot of time on them because they weren't in the government. They didn't represent a very dynamic or growing force in politics and they didn't seem to represent any threat either to public order or to American interests. If they came around and wanted to see somebody in the Embassy, I was the guy to talk to, but I didn't really spend a lot of time cultivating them.

I spent most of my time with the Republicans and the Social Democrats and the Socialists. Not the Communists because at that time you were advised not to have direct contacts with the Communist Party in Italy. The philosophy there was that if the American Embassy developed an overt relationship there with that party it would give it greater respectability as a democratic player than was considered to be justified or wise. So I had to gather most of my information on the Communist Party from reading their press and from talking to Italian experts on the Communist Party who wrote in journals and to talk with Socialists and Social Democratic politicians. Some of them were ex-Communists and had experience in the party and knowledge of the individuals in it.

That was the kind of job I had.

Q: For somebody looking at this and see “cultivate” could you explain what a political officer with an assignment to report on the left wing in Italy, what did you do?

BAKER: That's a good question. When you go in there and have that job like this your predecessor, who has been handling those contacts, often will have an occasion before he leaves at which he introduces you to the people that he thinks are valuable and informative and interested in having a contact with the United States. That is one way. The other thing

you do is read the press and if you see an interesting article by a journalist or politician, you call him up and say, “That's a very interesting article you wrote. I would like to stop by if you have time and talk to you about it.” Usually that is a little bit flattering and they say, “Yes, that will be very nice.” You then arrange to meet with him or have a drink or take him out to lunch and that leads, you hope, at least to an acquaintance and perhaps to a friendship.

Of course, one of the things that you always have in your quiver is the potential of a Leader Grant program. The United States has a fine program that the USIA runs. Italian politicians took advantage of that program when they were selected and I think some of them felt that if they got to know someone and had a good relationship with the Embassy it might result eventually in an invitation to the Leader Grant program, and sometimes it did.

So that, plus the fact that Italian politicians generally are quite approachable...they are not inclined to put you off and regard you as interlopers as the politicians of some other countries. The United States had a very strong standing in Italy. It is quite influential in Italy. So if you were representing the American Embassy in Italy, mostly they would be inclined to talk with you. Provided you got on top of the language, there wasn't great difficulty in establishing contact.

Q: One of the things that always interested me in the Embassy's reporting on politics...we are talking now about the 1960-63 period...going from 1950 up until the end of the seventies, the basic combination of political parties and their relative standing didn't change a great deal. The Christian Democrats were running things with some help from some of the more moderate parties. The Communist Party had their quarter to a third percent. Yet we seem to report on the minuet that seemed to be going on within the Italian government. Did you ever feel that this was nice but to what avail our reporting on the Italians?

BAKER: You are leading up to the principal issue of that period which took most of my attention. There were two issues that I was concerned with. One was the growth of the Italian Communist Party. Was it growing, why and where? Had it recovered from the pasting it took because of the Soviet Union's intervention in Budapest in the fifties? That was one question. Were they, so to speak, on the march in spite of the fact that you were having the beginnings of the Italian economic miracle?

The other issue was this, if the Communists were advancing and if the Christian Democratic Party was not gaining ground, would the democratic center of the spectrum get dangerously thin. You had the four parties—the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats, the Republicans and the Liberal Party, which was liberal in the conservative economic sense and not wanting too much government in business, etc., but not being clerical...that was their difference with the Christian Democrats, they were not linked to the Church. Those four parties had basically been running Italy since 1947, but together their majority in parliament had been shrinking from somewhere over 60 percent down to something getting close to the low 50s. So the question was, how or whether you should try to enlarge the democratic camp by bringing in the Socialist Party. That was the real debate of the early sixties. It was called the apertura a sinistra, the opening to the left. Should those four parties open to the left and bring the Socialist Party into the game? And then the question was on what terms should the Socialist Party come into the democratic center game? What would have to be given up or changed for them to come into the game?

Into that equation came the problem of how serious the Communist growth was. If you saw it as serious, then you were more strongly motivated to deal with the Socialists. If you felt it was stable and would decline gradually because of the economic growth of Italy, then you would say, “Why should we yield any ground to these wavering Socialists, half of whom still want to be close to the Communists and half of whom seem to be ready to cooperate with the center?”

The Embassy, itself, was not of one mind on the matter. Nor was the administration in Washington. The impression one had in Washington was that the White House, and particularly Arthur Schlesinger, who was in the Kennedy White House, felt quite attracted by the idea of the opening of the left. Schlesinger even sort of idealized it as some kind of Italian New Deal, which was one of his favorite historical subjects. The Department of State, because of its concern with the solidity of Italian foreign policy and commitment to NATO seemed to have some reservations about whether it would be weakened by bringing the Socialists into the government or into some relationship with the government.

In the Embassy you also had the different views. The Ambassador, Frederick Reinhardt, was sort of holding his peace on the matter to see how things developed. He was quite careful about taking any posture on that. His deputy, Outerbridge Horsey, was automatically opposed to the idea of the opening to the left. He was a rather conservative man of Catholic persuasion and seemingly closer to those parts of the Christian Democratic Party who had a lot of reservations about it. The senior guy in the political section who followed the Italian political affairs, George Lister, who is still around, I think, in the Department or as a consultant to the Department, was strongly in favor and felt that it was something that should be encouraged and supported. So one suddenly found that one was in a fairly charged atmosphere where one's orientation on this issue was being closely monitored, not in any spooky way, but people would just be waiting to see how you lined up when that matter came into discussion.

Q: Did your Eastern European background as far as assignment go make you a suspect among the Western Europeanists there?

BAKER: Not really, because there had been a tradition of having the person who monitored the Italian Communist Party be a person who had had experience in the Communist world as a diplomat. My predecessors in that function had also come out of an experience with international Communism, rather than with Western European politics. So I was not an aberration in having that background. But I fairly early on perceived that

the Italian Communist Party was quite a special animal and had its own traditions. It was rather over towards the less revolutionary side of the international Communist movement and was trying domestically to present a non-revolutionary face in order not to lose and perhaps regain the links with the Socialist Party and to restrain—to break, if possible—the trend towards pulling the Socialists toward the center.

I think the Communists perceived that should the Socialists in effect join the center then they would be lost to a future return to the leftist front, so to speak. So they played down their “revolutionary” side and their links to Moscow. Nevertheless, they still had to wave the revolutionary banner every so often on the required occasions.

They were still going to those international Communist movement gatherings which took place in the sixties. They often occurred at the time of the congresses of the East European parties. One of them occurred in late 1960 at the Romanian Communist Party Congress. The Italian Communists came back from there with the news that there had been a serious altercation between the Chinese and the Soviet parties. It had taken the form of taking a different stand with respect to the Albanian party. But the Italian Communists were not deceived that this was all directed at the Albanian party and understood that this was a proxy way of illustrating a developing rift.

That was one of the early signs of the Sino-Soviet rift. We gathered information on it and reported it in some detail to the State Department, but it did seem to us that there was some time before that was taken seriously as a significant change in the international Communist movement.By way of illustrating the function of the Italian Communist Party, I think it is interesting that the news about that came out largely and first through the Italian Communist Party, which, like other Italians, tended to be more talkative and less secretive than other parties in the movement.

Anyway, by about 1962 it became clear that the leader of the Christian Democrats, Aldo Moro, was getting ready to make a gradual opening to the left and since the Italian

governments were falling and being reconstituted fairly frequently then, there was an occasion in the fall of 1962 to construct a government which, while not having the Socialist Party in it, would depend on the Socialist Party for parliamentary support. This would be a government of the Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and the Republicans and with the parliamentary support of the Socialists.

But as this began to take shape, alarm bells rang in several places because of the concern that this was the first step in bringing the Socialists into the government. There was a lot of concern about whether the commitment to NATO would have to be somehow softened because the Socialist had taken a posture critical of NATO or whether the deal would basically be made over domestic issues. Finally, it came down to the point as to whether the Embassy would recommend using its rather good connections with strong parts of the Christian Democratic Party to actually make a strong advisory against such a combination. In effect, go to Moro or to people who would influence Moro and say, “Don't do this. This is dangerous. It is dangerous to Italy. It is dangerous to the alliance and perhaps dangerous to the American-Italian relationship.”

So that issue was laid out in a meeting that took place in the Embassy at which I was present along with the head of the political section and the station chief and various other players.

Q: What was the CIA attitude, at least in country, towards the Communists?

BAKER: Well, at that time the Agency had a fairly active set of activities in support of different programs in the democratic center parties, particularly the Christian Democratic Party. So they were following things very closely and had their own set of contacts with Italian politicians. It was sometimes awkward for some of us on the overt side. The inclination of the station chief was like the inclination of the Minister, to be concerned and cautious about the opening to the left, and to be ready to use assets to obstruct it. So the general discussion was about whether or not one should do that.

Well, by that time I had come to the conclusion that Italy was in a fairly good state of economic development. The leader of its largest party, the Christian Democrats, was an experienced politician, a very judicious man. We weren't talking about a struggling democracy in the wake of World War II, we were talking about a system which had been operational for 17 years after World War II. So I offered the view that I thought we would be taking a heavy responsibility on our selves to try to guide the Italian choice in this matter at this stage in their development. And furthermore, based on contacts I had with the Socialist Party, I did not think they would seriously condition Italy's foreign policy. I thought that they would choose to make their impact and their price for coming into the arrangement more in the domestic area where the concerns of their electorate were more strong. I took the view “Let's not be cheerleaders for the opening to the left, but let's not try to block it either. Let's treat the Italian political leadership as if they had come of age and they have to make their choices and go down with them or win with them, whatever.”

I am not aware of everything that happened after that meeting or of everything that might have or might not have been done, but I do know that the Christian Democratic Party did go ahead and make their deal. Basically the price of their deal was the nationalization of the Italian electric industry. It probably wasn't a helluva good idea, but it didn't cost the NATO alliance or American national interest a whole lot. And since that time, of course, the Socialist Party the following year came into the government and its leaders began to have ministerial posts and in the next 20 or 30 years it became just another left of center party in Italy, occasionally holding the prime ministership.

Q: Did you have the feeling, particularly because you were coming from outside...people who serve in Italy tend to come back, and back and back. I was Consul General in Naples and was surrounded by old Italian hands both in the Consulate and the Embassy. Did you have the feeling that we were taking much more of a propriety view and almost patronizing view of the Italian body politics than say in other European countries?

BAKER: I hadn't served in other Western European countries so I couldn't make that comparison, but it was my impression that we were pretty heavily engaged. It probably went back to the fact that we were the principal liberating power in Italy at the end of the war. We were the government that weighed in very heavily through Italian-American organizations and the Church, etc. in 1948 when it looked like there was a real threat that there might be a Socialist-Communist victory right in the period of the Berlin Blockade and all that. So we did weigh in heavily and I think ever since that period we had a sort of structure for being in a somewhat patronizing position and a lot of Italians were not only used to it but even played into it. Their politicians wanted the support and blessing of the American power. But it did seem to me by the time I got there in 1960 that this was perhaps more than it should be at that stage in history. That's I think why when the chips came on the table, I reacted in the way I did in that discussion.

Q: Any other issues that you were involved with? How did we view Italy as part of NATO?

BAKER: One of the things that was going on at that time...I wasn't involved in it because I wasn't handling relationships with the Foreign Ministry. The chief of the political section did that. But there was this ill-fated effort to create the multilateral force. The idea was that there would be some kind of jointly managed ships that would sail around the periphery of Europe armed with intermediate missilery, etc. That would be a way of creating a nuclear counter threat to the Russian bloc that would not just be an American one. Well, that never did fly. It had a fair amount of criticism on the left of the Italian spectrum and it was the kind of issue that, of course, was particularly uncomfortable for the Socialists, because they were not only lukewarm towards NATO but they were strongly anti-nuclear. So waving that issue around was something that tended to put something of a strain on the process of bringing the Socialists into the central area of the democratic spectrum.

I felt relieved that I did not have to play a particularly active role in hawking that particular proposal.

Q: Anything else?

BAKER: No. The evolution of the Communist movement as perceived through the Italian Communists and the opening to the left were the two aspects of my three years there that stand out in my mind.

Q: You were there at a very crucial time. Then you left Rome and moved to United Nations Affairs back in Washington from 1963-67.

BAKER: I took an assignment to the US Mission in New York. Adlai Stevenson was still in charge there. I started out as one of six or seven officers in the political section in the Mission. The head of the political section was Richard Pedersen, who had been around the Mission for many years and was quite well versed in UN affairs. He assigned issues to the political officers and I was assigned the Cyprus issue, which within a few months suddenly broke into flames in Nicosia because the Greek Cypriots were challenging the regime of the Treaties of Nicosia that had been set in place before the British withdrew.

Q: Archbishop Makarios was there?

BAKER: Yes. So there was violence in Nicosia and fighting between the Greeks and the Turks. This finally came to the Security Council in the winter of 1963-64. We had a series of meetings the result of which was the creation of the peacekeeping force on Cyprus which is there to this day. That was an interesting process because I think it was the first occasion on which the Security Council turned to the non-permanent members to take a lead in negotiating a solution which would be put before the Council. The British couldn't get into it because they were the former colonial power...but we perceived that the more we got into it as the central broker, the more we would tend to East-Westernize the problem, which didn't seem to be very helpful in the sense that it wasn't an East-West problem anyway, it was a Greek-Turk problem.

Q: East-West, this was between the Soviet Union and the US?

BAKER: Yes. So if the proposal that came forward in the Council looked like an American proposal, it would probably be a good way to invite Soviet opposition and maybe even veto. So the Norwegian and Brazilian members of the Council, both of whom had rather competent ambassadors, took the lead on that. Charlie Yost, who was Adlai Stevenson's deputy, rather adroitly encouraged them along the way. I served as sort of a go-between trying to keep up the process and putting messages and ideas into the process and, of course, reporting voluminously to the Department about the procedure.

So, as a result of that I became quite well acquainted with all the players in that drama. Not Makarios, himself, because he stayed in Cyprus, but his Foreign Minister, Kyprianou; his ambassador in New York, who was an odd old fellow named Rossides; Rossides' young, activist assistant, Andrew Jakovides, who is now the Cypriot Ambassador in the United Nations, the Cypriot players, Clarides of the Greek-Cypriots, Denktash, who is still the leader of the Turkish-Cypriots, the Turkish and Greek Ambassadors, Erelp and Bitsios, and the Secretary General of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Bayulken, who took an active interest in the matter. So I have a very vivid memory of all those players and their interactions and their rather high degree of emotion over this whole process.

Q: Was the Greek lobby in the United States a problem?

BAKER: To the degree that the Greek lobby weighed in...they were accustomed to weighing in in Washington. The Greek lobby was not all over us in New York. I didn't really sense from the kind of instructions we got that we were particularly leaning towards the Greek point of view on this. The Greek government was pretty careful in that period. They were not 100% behind what Makarios was doing. They were concerned that the people who were calling for Enosis, which was the union of Cyprus to Greece, would create a real nasty situation between them and the Turks and they weren't sure they were really up for

that. So they tended to regard Makarios with a little bit of hesitation, not as a 100% ally, but somebody who was looking out for Makarios.

Q: With solid reason. What was your impression of Adlai Stevenson as the head of your delegation?

BAKER: I arrived there the fall of 1963 and I worked for the Mission under his leadership until he died July, 1965. But I was one of a number of officers in the political section. I didn't work regularly in direct contact with Stevenson. When the Cyprus issue or other issues that I handled were in the Security Council, I worked for him and wrote drafts of his speeches and was always impressed on how he could turn a rather pedestrian draft into a work of considerable artistry. It was rather humbling to even try to write a first draft for somebody like Stevenson. I was always impressed by the amount of effort he put in to what I might have regarded a fairly routine presentation in the Council. But for him there wasn't any such thing as a routine presentation and he would want it to be a quality presentation, and it was. He knew how to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

So I really respected that capability and I respected and enjoyed his sense of humor when he chaired meetings and when he entertained visiting chiefs of state. He had dinners for them at his apartment at the Waldorf. I was present at some of those and he was remarkably gracious and witty on those occasions. I particularly remember one he had for King Hussein of Jordan at which I was present. He really did those things with great style.

He wasn't engaged as heavily in the sort of nitty-gritty negotiation of issues as the rest of us were, it seemed to me. And certainly nowhere near the degree that his successor, Arthur Goldberg, was. I think he relied heavily on Charlie Yost and Francis Plimpton, who was another one of the deputies there, to craft those positions and direct the strategy and manage the work of the Mission with respect to the work across the street. He would be the spokesman for it. But I didn't feel that he was always personally engaged in the

diplomacy. Maybe that was because of the time of life it was for him, or also of the things that he felt he could do best, I don't know.

Q: How did you feel about dealing with the other delegations? Did we make a difference as far as our approaches or were these delegations for the most part responding to instructions from home on important issues?

BAKER: That is a complicated issue. Often what you needed to do is to find out where key delegations might be inclining and if you felt that they didn't have much latitude, in terms of their own instructions, then you would have to ask the State Department, if you thought it was important enough, to weigh in their capitals to see if we could get their instructions changed. The major governments tended to work on instructions from their own countries.

The growing number of third world countries there often didn't have instructions from capitals and their tendency was to follow the lead of the leading non-aligned countries there. That became even more marked in the seventies when the non-aligned movement became even larger and more organized and more active, but it was already apparent in the mid-sixties.

It was apparent, for example, when the Cypriots, who figured that out, brought the Cypriot issue into the General Assembly in 1965. What the Cypriots were getting in the Security Council was more or less a recognition of an effort to work their way out of the Treaty of Nicosia, which had established a certain Greek-Turk balance on the whole thing. What they really wanted to do, what Makarios wanted to do, was to change that regime, to say that that was a colonial imposition, that the Cypriots had signed the Treaty of Nicosia as a colony, not as an independent nation, and that, therefore, just as the rest of the formerly colonial world they had to take the steps towards the rest of their independence. They wanted the General Assembly to recognize their concept of what self-determination was for Cyprus. So they appealed to the third world to support them in a General Assembly resolution which would try to overturn in effect the Treaty of Nicosia.

That was the subject of a considerable amount of lobbying and campaigning in the General Assembly in 1965, the result of which was a somewhat equivocal one for the Cypriots. I think they won their resolution, but not with sufficient margin to really make it very operational.

Q: Were there any other issues that you were primarily concerned with?

BAKER: You were asking me about Stevenson. In the Stevenson period. I worked on the Cyprus issue and the issue of Yemen, where the Egyptians were conducting a considerable intervention and where we were trying to create a UN presence that would untangle all that, and eventually did. During General Assemblies I was engaged on the issue in the special political committee of apartheid and the annual debate in that same committee on Palestine. So I spent a lot of time in the fall on those issues and I spent a lot of time in the Security Council on Cyprus and Yemen. In the process I got quite well acquainted with Ralph Bunche because he was the guru of peacekeeping, and his deputy, Brian Urquhart. They were the people who I consulted with on all the operational aspects of peacekeeping as they emerged from the Security Council.

But my life and activity at the US Mission changed quite radically when Stevenson died.

Q: He died in 1965?

BAKER: Yes. One of his close advisors at the Mission was a fellow by the name of David Guyer. He, among other things, was looking after the Kashmir issue, which was rather quiescent. When Stevenson died, David left the Mission and this issue was dropped in my package with nobody giving it a whole lot of attention or to Indo Pakistani problems.

Then on September 1, 1965, the Pakistanis attacked across the border into India early in the morning. And September 1 was the day that Arthur Goldberg, having been hauled off the Supreme Court by Lyndon Johnson, was due to arrive to replace deceased Adlai

Stevenson. And September 1 was the first day of September, which turned out to be the month that the United States had to be Chairman of the Security Council.

So here comes Arthur Goldberg, early in the morning of his first day, smack into the chair of the Security Council on an issue which I, having inherited it about a month before, was required to backstop him. So I spent a very intense couple of months in the Security Council day and night with Arthur Goldberg, on the phone to the Department, sending myriad of messages to Chester Bowles in India and to our Embassy in Pakistan. Arthur was not like Stevenson in that regard. He got into the guts and strategy and negotiations from the very outset, and sort of hung on like a bulldog. He would think about and worry about and maneuver these issues both within the American government and in the Security Council in an extraordinarily energetic way, which, of course, put considerable demands and challenges on my time.

It was extremely interesting and educational and I developed a close relationship with Arthur Goldberg. He promoted my boss to be one of the deputy ambassadors and promoted me to be chief of the political section, so for the second two years that I was at the Mission, I was engaged across a wide range of issues in direct contact with Arthur Goldberg.

Q: With the Pak-Indian war, one of almost the constants in American post-war relations has been, at least on the Foreign Service point of view, the fact that our Ambassador to India tends to get more Indian than the Indians and the same for our Ambassador in Pakistan. Did you find these men, Chuck Bowles and whoever the other man was, helpful or were they partisans where you really couldn't use them to nudge the government to which they were accredited?

BAKER: Well, my recollection is that Bowles was very much more engaged in that way than our Ambassador to Pakistan, whose name I can't remember right now. The messages that came back and forth from New Delhi were more impassioned than through

the other channel. On the other hand, there was no lack of passion on the part of the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Mr. Bhutto, who appeared on the scene loaded with emotion and was a great contrast to the rather cool demeanor of the Indian Foreign Minister, Sweran Singh, who came in for the final rounds of negotiation on the cease fire that was finally crafted by Goldberg.

I think Goldberg was at pains to keep in the middle of that one and not to appear to be partisan in any way. I think in a way he would have liked to try to carry the thing on out to the end, but somewhere in that fall the Soviets in the form of Prime Minister Kosygin, offered the good offices of the Soviet Union to try to resolve the conflict. The Pakistanis looked somewhat askance at this because they, with some justification, saw the long Soviet relationship with India might not work to their advantage and I think they rather hoped that Lyndon Johnson and Goldberg would keep an American involvement in that issue.

But Johnson, apparently, was ready to hand that one off. That resulted in the series of meetings in Tashkent, which finally led to some cooling off of that conflict. I think there was about a month there when I didn't get home at all. I slept in the Mission. There was some bed down in the nurse's office that I would flop on. The meetings of the Security Council kept occurring at odd hours of the night when some temporary cease fire was broken.

Q: Of course, telegrams were coming in also from about as far as you could come and you would be out of sync.

BAKER: Yes. We got a high volume of very highly classified stuff and I was supposed to always be on top of all of it. It was a busy season.

The other dramatic event of that two years was, of course, the Six Day War. That was in June, 1967, between Israel and basically Egypt. We saw that crisis emerging as the Egyptians moved through the UN force in the Sinai, which the Israelis saw as very threatening. Of course the Israelis were never willing to see the UN force on their side of

the border, but it had been sitting ever since 1956 on the Egyptian side of the border in the Sinai as a buffer. Nasser more or less moved it aside and took control of the Sharm el Sheikh which was an outpost overlooking the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba leading to Israel's southern port, Elat.

Q: It was thought that the head of the UN had a major responsibility to end this war, by not procrastinating and stopping this stupid move on the part of Nasser of trying to get the UN force out when Nasser wasn't going to be able to beat the Israelis. What was the feeling within our delegation about the UN role and particularly U Thant's?

BAKER: Well, his position would have been stronger if that were a force that had been positioned on both sides of the border, but as it was, it was a force that was in place solely on the by your leave of one side, which was Egypt. So at such time as the host country stated that the force was not necessary or should be moved aside, there wasn't a whole lot you could argue about since it was not a green line type of force, it was an in-country force.

Q: Well the accusation has been that he moved with undue haste.

BAKER: You could argue that he should have dragged his feet more, but on legal grounds, because of the circumstances I have described, he had to accede to the host country's position on that force which was not an internationally employed force, and that is something that a lot of people overlooked. Of course the Israelis in complaining about that never acknowledged that they had never agreed to have the force on their side of the line.

Q: Was there much UN action in the aftermath of this war?

BAKER: The cease-fire was basically negotiated in the Security Council. One could see the terms of the cease-fire changing as the fortunes of war changed. What was remarkable to me, and I have never gotten a whole explanation for it, was that on the

evening of May 31, Arthur Goldberg invited senior people from the political section and his deputies to his apartment at the Waldorf and said that he just wanted to have a little meeting to exchange views on the Arab-Israeli crisis. We all came there and spent a couple of hours talking with Arthur about it. About six hours later word came that the Israelis had moved over the line of demarcation into the Sinai. In retrospect, it struck me kind of interesting that Arthur called that meeting at just that time. It almost looked like he was saying, “I want to make sure that all of my guys are in place because something is going to happen.” It has made me wonder in retrospect whether Arthur, who, of course, had very close ties to the Israeli government, had had advance tips.

Q: He was Jewish and a labor leader in the United States and Israel had a Labor government at that time.

BAKER: He never acknowledged that he had advance tips but there was just that juxtaposition that made me wonder.

In the first hours of that war, the Israeli forces met some resistance...the Jordanian forces went in, much to their later regret...and the Arabs in and around the Security Council were on the verge of jubilation. Gradually, as the news of the Israeli breakthrough towards the Suez came through, the whole atmosphere changed and the kind of cease-fire that they had been trying to get they had to give up on.

So eventually, the kind of cease-fire that Goldberg was working for was worked out. That was essentially a cease-fire in place, not a cease-fire and withdrawal. Then, in those places, the Israelis, who had crossed the Suez Canal to encircle some Egyptian forces, did come back over and the new UN posts were set up along the Suez Canal. So that was the new peacekeeping operation. It wasn't a UNEF anymore, it was a truce observation force along there.

Q: How did you find the Arab delegations? Were you dealing with them?

BAKER: I was dealing with them for the whole four years I was there because I was active on the Palestine issue in the special political committee for all four years. In 1965 I was named as chairman of the Palestine Reconciliation Commission. That was a three nation commission that sort of had the oversight...it was us, the Turks and the French... and our only function by the time I got there was the care and preservation of the land records of Israel.

The idea was that the early resolution passed sometime in the late forties which called for the possibility of return of the Arabs to their homes in Palestine, in Israel, the only way that resolution could ever be carried out would be if somebody kept track of whose land was whose. So we had all these British Mandate records and I guess they are still there to this day.

Q: There have been accusations in recent years about West Bank Arabs having trouble proving their claims to bits of land.

BAKER: Yes, that's right. You see the idea was, according to a 1948 resolution, that you would either get repatriation or compensation. Since it was more and more apparent that the Israelis didn't want to let any of those Arabs repatriate into Israel proper, then the idea was that in whatever ultimate peace agreement you ever had there would have to be compensation and how would you calculate compensation unless one knew who had owned what. So I trust those things are still being carefully guarded because if there ever is a peace settlement in which Israel is recognized as a state that may be one piece of it...that is if Arabs are not allowed to repatriate to their homes in Israel, then they must be compensated.

Q: Did you find with the Arab delegations that you were dealing with after this really very shocking defeat as far as the Arabs were concerned, a change in attitude towards the United States because later the story was put out that it was really American planes that

were responsible for the initial attack? In fact our relations with most of these governments ceased. How did you find this in the UN?

BAKER: The UN is an interesting place in that regard because when you work there as a professional diplomat and you are seeing these people everyday in the delegate's lounge and so on, you establish personal relationships and they are closer than in normal diplomatic posts precisely because you are seeing them every day and you really get quite well acquainted with these people. Therefore, even in the worst of circumstances, people don't turn their back on you. Maybe some new diplomat who comes in with some new instruction or his government doesn't have relations with you, you may not get to know. But the people you already know you keep on seeing and they tell you what their government is thinking but won't have any personal animosity about it.

Q: Well, the fact that we ceased relations with the Egyptians, the Syrians and all, within the UN and your work did this make any difference?

BAKER: For me personally not very much and for this reason. When we finished towards the end of June the consideration of the thing in the Security Council there was then a special assembly of the General Assembly that the Arabs called for which was then held. The effort was really to create the basis for some future solution, not just to sit there with a cease-fire and a defeat. So what was started in that assembly was the rather complex negotiation that eventually led to Resolution 242, the land for peace...

Q: The governing one for even today.

BAKER: Yes. And that came out of that assembly. Actually it wasn't concluded until some point during the fall assembly of the General Assembly in November. But we were engaged in those negotiations in support of Arthur Goldberg.

For me that special General Assembly was sort of my last hurrah at the UN. I was, at that point, pulling out and getting ready for another assignment, so I wasn't around for very

much of the aftermath of the Security Council consideration of the Six Day War. I was eagerly wrapping it up to get ready to go to Harvard for a year as a Fellow.

Q: What were you doing at Harvard?

BAKER: Each year the Department sends a person to the Center for International Affairs Fellows Program and I sort of raised my hand for that because you usually get some kind of mid-career training at the War College or something, so I raised my hand for that one because I thought it would be more interesting. I got nominated for it so I moved off in August and got up to Harvard early September.

Q: Were you taught by Henry Kissinger then?

BAKER: Yeah, I went to Henry's classes. He was already trying to figure out what might happen in the 1968 elections.

Q: How did you find Henry Kissinger...what was your impression? Obviously he is a very intelligent man but here he was an academic and here you were an experienced diplomat who had been dealing with many of the major problems of American foreign policy. Did you find him too academic?

BAKER: Well, Henry was, throughout the sixties, on a fairly constant series of plane rides to Washington as a consultant, largely with the Defense Department, but also others. Of course, he was already a consultant to Nelson Rockefeller. He was very much engaged in practical politics. His seminar, which I think was called the National Security Seminar, was in a way an effort to bring the thinking of government leaders to the campus and expose people who might be otherwise too academically lost or engaged to the fairly pragmatic types of decision making that were happening. So I can hardly remember a session of his seminar when he conducted or presented the thesis. Almost every time it would be somebody who he brought up from Washington or sometimes somebody coming through from Europe who would be asked to lay out the thesis. Then he would very sharply go

at that presentation to try to probe for any inconsistences or weaknesses or unanswered questions. Sometimes he would slice up the victim a bit. Then he would turnover the carcass to the students who were mostly graduate students and some of us who were Fellows from the Fellows program. It was a fairly large group...40-50 people.

I was interested in that technique because subsequently, about three years later when I was back in Washington after an assignment in Czechoslovakia, I had occasion to go to the National Security Council, to some of its crisis meetings. It seemed to me that he ran the National Security Council meetings almost the same way. As you know the NSC usually doesn't operate at the Cabinet level, it acts, more often, through an interagency group more or less at the assistant secretary level. I went in the capacity of an Office Director with my Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Walt Stoessel, to a couple of those sessions. Henry would invariably sort of ask somebody to lay out the problem and, if appropriate, the necessary or appropriate American response to the problem. Then he would start chipping at it and jabbing at it more or less the same way he did in his National Security Seminar. He would refer to me when he caught sight of me as his “old stu-dent'.”

Q: I was wondering if we might cut at this point. We are going to be doing quite a bit of Eastern Europe after this.

Today is April 14, 1993 and this is a continuing interview with John A. Baker, Jr. We are really at the point now of the 1968-70 period when you went to Prague as Deputy Chief of Mission. How did you get that assignment?

BAKER: During the previous year, following a fairly exhausting four years at the US Mission to the UN, I was able to get a mid-career training assignment. Since I had to move some place anyway from Connecticut where I was living I was able to arrange to get assigned to the Center for International Affairs at Harvard as a Fellow rather than go to the War College or some other program. During that year at Harvard, which was a very

interesting one I might add, and one during which I attended the famous Henry Kissinger National Security Seminar, I was thinking, of course, of my follow on assignment.

My strategy was really to get some exposure to the Middle East and I was doing a paper, as one had to do for that program, on Soviet policy in the Middle East in the period leading up to the Six Day War. I thought that might enhance my otherwise rather slim credentials for the Middle East.

I wrote to our Ambassador in Lebanon, because that is a place that you don't really have to have Arabic to start, I had French, and offered my services as DCM there because I knew the posting of the incumbent was about to end in the summer of 1968. At the same time I also wrote to our Ambassador at Prague, Jake Beam, whom I had known in my initial assignment in Yugoslavia in 1951, where he was at that time Counselor. I didn't know, of course, one never does, whether either one of these would come through.

But along about March I did get an indication from Ambassador Beam that he would like me to come there and, seizing the bird in the hand, I accepted. About a month later I got a similar offer to go to Lebanon, which by then I had to decline.

So I quickly signed up for a not too effective Czech language course in Harvard, as I wasn't able to go down to the Foreign Service Institute, and tried to prepare myself to understand what was happening in what was then being described as the Prague Spring. Then I arrived with my family towards the end of June, 1968 in Prague as Deputy Chief of Mission.

Right in that very week that I arrived there was published a manifesto entitled, “Two Thousand Words” which was written by an intellectual who was one of the people who was pushing the reform Communist program of Dubcek further and faster. Many intellectuals, both non-Communists and Communists, were enthusiastic about the action program which Dubcek had launched in the spring of 1968 which pointed to various economic and

political reforms and were urging in this eloquent “Two Thousand Words” a more rapid pace towards real democracy in Czechoslovakia.

Obviously this piece, along with other things that were happening, began to get reaction in Russia and there would be comments in the Russian press critical of what was regarded as a revisionist, Zionist conspiracy to extract Czechoslovakia from the Socialist family of nations.

During July there were a number of events that seemed to accelerate the tension between the Czechoslovak leadership and the Warsaw Pact countries. As I recall, one of the events was a meeting which the Warsaw Pact countries held in Warsaw, and they rather belatedly invited the Czechoslovak party leaders to come but the way the meeting was described and couched, sounded very much like a sort of sitting in judgment on what was occurring in Czechoslovakia, and the Czechoslovak leaders declined to be sort of bad boys appearing before their peers or elders in this situation. So they didn't go to Warsaw. As a result, the communique that came out of there was not very much to their liking. Nevertheless, it was meant to stand as a warning to them that their comrades in the Eastern bloc felt they were going too far.

Q: At this time, you were the new boy on the block, these things were happening, how was the Embassy, Beam, but also from the emanations you were getting from our Embassies in Moscow and Warsaw, how were they reading how this thing was going and how did they see the future at this time?

BAKER: Well, the Embassy was reading and reporting these reports very closely, and I think quite effectively. We had an excellent political/economic section that was led by an officer named Mark Garrison, who later went on to Moscow in a similar role and was later DCM there. They produced at least one telegraphic report daily on all these events, including a lot of information that we gathered from a growing number of quite candid

Czechoslovak contacts, because the whole atmosphere was much less restrictive in the Dubcek, Prague Spring, atmosphere.

The thrust of these reports was that there was a rising tension between what was happening in Czechoslovakia and what one normally expected as the limits that were placed on what an Eastern European state could be expected to do within the Soviet Bloc. So, I think, those of us who had had experience in Russia, or elsewhere in Eastern Europe, felt that this was a somewhat worrisome situation. As much as we were sympathetic to what Dubcek and others were trying to do, we were obviously concerned as to where that might end.

Q: Were we in a way trying to dampen down the Czechs...sort of passing the word to be careful and don't poke a stick at this bear too much, or were we just sort of observing?

BAKER: Well, there were some of us who thought that it might be helpful if we were to express a little caution. There was one instance that I recall personally in which I took that view. This occurred about the 5th of August and took place after the famous meetings with the Soviet leadership on the Czechoslovak-Russian border at Cierna and Tisov where almost the entire Soviet Politburo met almost the entire Czechoslovak Politburo. Then there was the subsequent meeting in Bratislava where the other Warsaw Pact countries were summoned to endorse the understandings that were thought to have been reached at Cierna.

Those two meetings were interpreted by a large part of the world press as the at least temporary reconciliation of the Czechoslovak leadership with the other Communist countries and particularly with the Soviets. People more or less assumed that the Czechoslovak leadership had agreed to take it a little slow and curb some of the more enthusiastic democrats. Nevertheless, the week immediately following that the Czech press carried on almost without change and were publishing articles that dredged up some

rather critical periods of Russian pressure on the Czechoslovak republic and incidents that occurred in the late forties that led to the takeover by the Communists.

About that time a group of American newsmen arrived for a visit and the Ambassador entertained them at lunch and I was invited. There were some Czech newsmen there too. After lunch we went out on the terrace because one could never be sure of what would happen to what one said in the dining room and we talked further with the American and Czechoslovak journalists. I actually raised this issue with one of them and said, “What do you think about this wave of expressive articles occurring right after those two diplomatic meetings? Aren't you concerned as to whether this will stir up people in Russia who are worried about what is happening here?” They said, “We cannot think that way. Once we start thinking that way we will then be guilty of self-censorship. And once we start self-censoring ourselves, we are doing the job of the Soviets and we are undermining the progress towards freedom of expression which we advocate and which we have partially obtained and want to solidify. So we really feel that it would be playing against our interests to curtail, either on our own initiative or on our editors' initiatives, what we are saying.”I remember very clearly the man who said that because I met him a year to two later when he was in exile.After that meeting, the next time I talked to Ambassador Beam I said, “You know these people don't seem to understand that some restraint may be called for at this time. Do you think there is anything that we could usefully do?” He said, “I agree with you, but I don't think it would be appropriate for us to intervene in this matter. The Czechs and Slovaks certainly ought to know the Soviets mentality and the dangers from the Soviet side as well or better than we do. After all they have been raised in that system and that neighborhood. We do not want to become a party to a process of shutting down or appearing to favor shutting down the latitude that they have begun to win here.” So, I took that as a general policy with respect to that problem. We, as far as I know didn't put out any cautionary advice at that time.

Q: I am thinking of the dynamics of an embassy. You usually have junior officers who when things start to move almost get ahead of the game, get excited and want to get involved. Were you sort of having to rein them in?

BAKER: No, not really. At that period the atmosphere was such that Embassy officers, although they may very well have still been surveyed from time to time, had a lot of access. They could go to public events and meet people at public events and could develop personal contacts with them and that has always been my perception of what embassy officers ought to do if the circumstances permit. In fact, just for doing that in 1958 in Moscow, I was expelled from the country because the Soviets didn't share our view of what a diplomat normally does. So you have to consider that I am on the more aggressive edge of this issue. I wasn't restraining them.

In some of the reporting, some of the enthusiasm of drawing dramatic conclusions and so on from this or that would sometimes show itself and I very occasionally would have to edit that down, but the material that came to me having passed through Mark Garrison and his very competent editing very rarely in my view required very much tinkering. I thought that he managed the officers in that section very skillfully.

Q: Did you have any contact at that time in Prague with the Soviets?

BAKER: Very little contact. In fact, I don't remember any at all in the pre-invasion period except for the fact that you would see them at National Day events. My own feeling was that it would not be terribly well viewed by the Czechoslovaks to see us embracing the Soviets in a cheerful fashion at the time that the Soviets were exerting a considerable amount of pressure on them. So I never sought the Soviet representatives out at these events. If, by any chance, I happened to run into one or one introduced himself to me, I would just chat briefly and then move on. So, no, there was no particular contact. And I don't recall much contact with other Socialist state diplomats. Maybe a little bit with the Poles and I had very frequent and regular and friendly contact with a Yugoslav journalist

there from their state agency Tanjug, who had been in Prague a number of years and was extraordinarily well informed. I guess he was the only person at that time from the Eastern European collection of people that I recall seeing regularly.

Q: How did we look upon the situation? Were we looking at the possibility of a scenario of what actually did happen, that the Soviets would gather together and just snuff this out, and if it happened, were we concerned about what our reaction would be?

BAKER: We were certainly looking at that possibility very acutely because all this time Soviet forces were exercising close to the borders of Czechoslovakia in Poland and East Germany particularly, and also in the western Ukraine. I don't remember as much about them in Hungary. I think the Hungarians were trying to as much as they could to stand down from this conflict. But certainly there were plenty of Russian troops in position to do what they did. And we certainly knew they were there. Of course they could have been there simply representing a threat or they could have been there to carry out an actual invasion. I think my own conclusion was, when we went back over these events, that the Soviets themselves didn't decide which purpose they were there for until about four or five days before the actual invasion. They hoped to bring enough pressure to bear on Dubcek and the Czechoslovak leaders with a threat so that they would achieve a rollback of the revisionist course or sufficient limitations of it so that they could live with it and that they only decided to invade when they reached the conclusion that they weren't going to be able to do that.

Q: Was it pretty much the feeling at the Embassy, although obviously a decision like that would be made at the American President's level, that no matter what happened we would only be passive bystanders?

BAKER: I think that was pretty well understood and in fact it looked as if the US government was leaning over backwards to illustrate that it was not trying to exploit in any way the Czechoslovak reform movement. For example, an exercise that we normally ran

in Bavaria at that time of year, a major exercise, we canceled because we didn't want to give any people an excuse to say that we were gearing up to do some kind of a military response to whatever the Soviets might do.

And we didn't want anyone to think that we were actively encouraging the Czechoslovaks to break out of the Warsaw Pact, or what ever, because we thought if it looked like there was some American involvement over there that would further stimulate the forces for intervention on the Russian side. The Russians would say, “Hey, we had better move in and shut this off before it gets to the point where we can't regain it.” Generally, I think, because of that posture there was an assumption that we were not trying to pry Czechoslovakia away but we were simply taking a benign posture towards their own internal process. And the signals that we got from the Czechoslovak leaders was that that was basically the kind of position they wanted us to take. They were not trying to draw closer to us or give the appearance that they were drawing closer to us.

Q: How did the events of late August, 1968 play out?

BAKER: I had my own little personal saga in that regard. In early August of 1968, right after that lunch that I described to you, I hastened back to the United States on compassionate leave because my father had died. He had been quite ill at the time I left and it was not totally a surprise, but I did want to go back for the funeral. And I did and stayed a day or two more after which I thought I should then turn right around and come back because of the fact that it seemed to me that there was a good possibility that the situation would deteriorate. I didn't go down to Washington. I talked with the people there on the phone and said I was back but would be going back to Prague because I thought there could be an intervention.

The people in the Department said that I was a good soldier but they really didn't think that was going to happen. The Warsaw Pact meeting in Bratislava had more or less cooled that off. All our intelligence seemed to suggest that the worst of the crisis was over.

So I went back and a few days later around the 12th or 14th of August there were a couple of quite dramatic visits to Prague. One by Tito, and one by Ceausescu, the Romanian leader. And then there was the somewhat aborted visit by Ulbricht who wanted to balance those two more independent Communist leaders by bringing a more orthodox viewpoint.

Q: He was the leader and very strict Stalinist from East Germany.

BAKER: And he was one of the ones most alarmed by the course of events in Czechoslovakia. The Czechs said, “Okay, you can come but you can only come to Karlovy Vary and we will have a little party with you there.” They didn't want him getting the kind of hostile treatment he might have gotten from the public in Prague.

Well, those events were further signals, I guess, to the conservatives in Russia that the Czechs were not going the way they hoped after the Bratislava meeting and Ulbricht probably sent in a rather alarmed report on his relative brush off when he went to Czechoslovakia.

At the same time, people in the diplomatic corps, because it was the middle of August, were going off on holiday. Our military attach# came in on the Saturday morning about the 16th or 17th of August and said that he was going on a holiday. We were sitting up in the communications area, where we often do on a Saturday morning to see what the cable traffic was. The Ambassador was there. He turned to me and said, “The Colonel here is going to go on holiday.” I said, “Well, what about it?” “Well, what do you think? Do you think there is going to be any trouble?” I said, “Well, I don't know if there is going to be any trouble, but my own judgment is that if there is going to be trouble it will happen within the next ten or twelve days because the Czechoslovak Communist Party has scheduled a congress for the end of August. At the congress they will get rid of most of the people who are friends of the Russian leadership. So if the Russians aren't satisfied with the current leadership and don't think they are going to be responsive enough, this may be the

time they move. Of course, it is also the time in terms of weather and the position of their forces."

The Ambassador didn't disagree with that, but when I resurfaced again a few hours later I said, "Well, what did you decide?" He said, "Well, the Colonel said his colleagues were going so I said okay, go ahead." So that was the way that came out.

About three or four days later I was awakened by the sound of heavy aircraft coming in over the city. Not long after that a bang on my door by the Ambassador—we lived up in the Embassy Residence compound—who said, "I'm on my way down to the Embassy, do you want to come down with me? The Soviets are here." That is what happened. He, I think, received a couple of days before the invasion a pretty strong indication from a source of his in Prague, another ambassador, that the Soviets were going to move. He sent this in back channel to alert the Department. He thought that this was a valid report. I never saw the message so I don't know exactly what he put in it. It wasn't as if he was totally surprised by what happened. But Washington certainly acted as if they were.

Q: What did you do at the Embassy during this period when the Soviets were taking over?

BAKER: The first two or three days we had a substantial evacuation problem of the Americans who were in the city. There was a huge geological convention at which about 400 Americans were present and other assorted individuals like Shirley Temple Black, who I think was there for the multiple sclerosis drive, and a number of journalists. All of these people were concerned for their safety. Of course the journalists were concerned for how they would communicate the story because their normal means of communication were blocked. So the Embassy was filled with people and phone calls and we had a sort of crisis center set up to handle all this. We told everybody to sit tight in their hotels and we would try to arrange orderly evacuation procedures.At the same time, in order to get a sense of what was happening in the city, we went out on two man patrols all day for two or three days until the Soviet forces were stabilizing the situation. I remember going

down town with another officer the first day that the Soviets were in there and there was a little small arms fire here and there and a rather noisy encounter up near the television station in downtown Prague where the Soviets had taken a couple of tanks up the street and were being harassed by Czechs who had set fire to the gasoline drums on the back of the tanks. So there were some explosions. I don't know if they fired their cannons into the buildings...there were reports that some of them had.

So we would see these Soviet tank crewmen on top of their tanks rattling down the streets more or less trying to intimate a crowd that didn't appear to be very intimated. The Czechs basically were distressed with what had happened and were determined not to be cowed and I think pretty much convinced that the Russians were not trying to do their job in a cruel fashion. They were trying to take over with a minimum application of force and a maximum show of force.So there were occasional casualties in Prague on those first few days, but there wasn't any bloody massacre. There were a lot of people out in the streets, a lot of young people charging around in backs of trucks waving Czechoslovak flags, a few of which had been dipped in blood from the few victims that had been hit. So it was not what I would describe as a war encounter, it was simply a rapid occupation by an overwhelming display of force, including a lot of armored vehicles and tanks.

Q: Did the Embassy have any contact with any of these occupying forces or did we stay away from them?

BAKER: The main contact was through vehicle inspections. The Czechoslovak opponents of the invasion were unwilling to cease and desist altogether, even when the radio station and television station were taken over by the occupation forces, Czech radio people seized enough radio equipment so that they could broadcast from mobile places around the country. So they continued to broadcast news of what was happening continually moving their transmitters around the country to stay on the air. The Russians were trying to locate and shut down these broadcasts. So they were looking for cars that were carrying

radio engineering equipment. The best place to intercept cars going from one part of the country to another was on the bridges across the Vltava River that flows through Prague.

So some of our personnel who for one reason or another had to drive across these bridges had their cars stopped and inspected and asked to open the trunks, etc. When they protested that they were diplomatic and pointed out the diplomatic plates, they were rebuffed apparently because the soldiers, not knowing the Latin alphabet, couldn't distinguish a diplomatic plate from a normal plate. So they were stopped just like everybody else.

So we racked up a string of incidents where our diplomatic immunity had been violated and a few days after the invasion the ambassador asked me to go to the Soviet Embassy and lodge a protest about the violations of our diplomatic rights. I did so and presented myself to my opposite number and he received me with a good deal of courtesy offering me coffee or a drink. I declined all that and said what my business was and made as forceful a complaint as I could and then left.

That was I thought the end of it. But the next morning, when I got into my office and looked out the window, there was a Soviet truck, like an American 2 # ton truck with a 50 caliber machine gun on top of it pointing right at my office window. I didn't feel very comfortable with that so I went outside and found the guy who was with the truck and asked to speak with the officer in command. This captain showed up and I said, “Can you explain to me what your vehicle is doing here?” He said, “I have been told that there have been inadvertent violations of the diplomatic rights of the American Embassy and I have been told to be positioned here to be sure that no further violations take place.” I said, “Well, that is very considerate of you, but for heavens sake why do you have your 50 caliber machine gun pointed at an Embassy window?” He had no explanation for that. I said, “I would strongly request that either you withdraw your truck to the end of the street or at least reposition your machine gun.” Some hours later the truck was gone. It looked like it was a tail twisting exercise by my opposite number.

Q: After the new Czech government, who were the hard liners who took over, how were relations with them...from 1968 until you left in 1970? Did things just go down hill?

BAKER: Our relations were very constrained and limited. The totally hard line group actually didn't take over until the following April, after a rather devastating riot which took place in Prague and other cities in the wake of the Czech hockey team's victory over the Soviet's in the Stockholm final of the cup. The indignities that were wreaked on Aeroflot and various Soviet installations in that riot brought a rapid visit from the Soviet Chief of Staff and, not long after that, a change in the Czechoslovak government.

So over that winter what was happening was a gradual slicing off, salami style, of the original Dubcek group. Dubcek was not removed, he was shifted to be president of parliament, where he couldn't do a whole lot of harm. The prime minister remained for some months, but the interior minister was changed and some people were forced out all together. It looked as if the Russians, having realized that they had made a military success but a political disaster, were trying to mitigate the consequences by a fairly gradual turning down of the screw. The man they sent to do that and was doing that reasonably cleverly, was a diplomat named Kuznetzov, who had been a deputy foreign minister and an experienced member of the Central Committee of the Party.

But there was no question about who was in charge in this process. The post-invasion government was not going to challenge the Russians in a serious way, although they tried to resist some of the new arrangements that were foisted on them.

But the things that we would have wanted to do with the Czechoslovak government, like proceed with a consular convention and set up cultural offices or settle the claims agreement, were put aside because we knew this was not a government that we could do that with. So there really wasn't much business to be done with that government. We had occasional calls on the Foreign Ministry and problems about citizens who ran into trouble, but it became a very low level type of relationship. So much so that when the Nixon

Administration was elected and chose to send Jake Beam to Moscow as Ambassador, they did not feel any sense of urgency about replacing him there. It was about six months before his successor, Mac Toon, arrived in July, 1969.

Q: How about living there? Was it a problem? Did you feel that all of the security apparatus had descended on you again?

BAKER: Yes, the atmosphere changed steadily, not immediately. Of course, after the first two or three weeks of the invasion, one was impressed by the military presence in the city. For example, I drove from my house, which was in a residential area, down the winding Serpentine to what was called Mala Strana, down near the river where our Embassy was. I would be doing a slalom each morning between about a dozen Soviet tanks that were placed along the Serpentine. So that gave you a certain sense of where you were at. Two or three weeks after the invasion the Russians withdrew their personnel outside the city so there wasn't a whole lot of evidence of Russian presence as the situation stabilized and as the Russians were satisfied that the Czech government and police were going to do their bidding.

Gradually, the people I knew and had begun to have normal friendly relationships with began to indicate to me that they were under pressure to terminate the relationship. Nobody was harassing me personally. Although I think the surveillance did pick up, it wasn't terribly ostentatious. The main signal I got was what I heard from my Czech contacts who said, “They know that I have been seeing you and say that I would be better off if I didn't.” That sort of thing. A few of them who were not in positions where they could be damaged, people who were artists or musicians or something like that, seemed to be able to maintain their contact with me. Most of them who had any kind of position in research institutes or government bodies or organizations, sort of disappeared. So, one didn't feel oppressed by measures that were taken against me or my family or the Embassy personally, but by the general atmosphere of suspicion and withdrawal that prevailed and really locked in after April, 1969.

Q: How did we view Czechoslovakia after this as far as its role as an espionage center which seemed to be one of the more efficient of the creatures of the Soviet Union? Was there training of terrorists that was going on that we were aware of?

BAKER: I don't think we were really aware of that, at least I wasn't. There may have been other people in the Embassy who were. But it was not a matter that came across my desk. The Soviets resumed using Czech diplomats as intelligence agents as they probably did, and in some cases may never have stopped. Most of that was aimed at targets outside of Czechoslovakia.

Q: So it didn't really get you involved.

BAKER: No. What struck us in the period after the invasion was that President Johnson, who was ending his presidency, was anxious to reach an arms control agreement with the Soviets and initially did not appear as if he even wanted to pause in his pursuit of an understanding with the Russians despite this rather brutal act in the middle of Europe. I think that distressed some of us. Eventually he was prevailed upon to stand down from that. But generally speaking, I think I felt at that time and some time afterwards, that for various reasons, and I guess Vietnam was one of them, we were too ready too soon to let it go and not allow it to be an obstruction to the US-Soviet relationship.

Q: When the Soviets moved into Afghanistan we took a much firmer stance. It was different, of course, but perhaps we had made the Soviets feel they would get the same reaction from us as in Czechoslovakia.

BAKER: I think there probably were Soviets who were surprised at our reaction in Afghanistan. Of course, Afghanistan was not really part of the Socialist bloc and therefore moving into Afghanistan represented a new advance into a previously unassimilated, unoccupied area and one which could give them closer access to the Indian Ocean. So there were several reasons for that sharper reaction. And, of course, by that time we were

out of the Vietnam thing and there weren't any more wishful hopes that the Russians somehow could help us extract honorably from that situation.

Q: You left Prague in 1970?

BAKER: Yes, in August, 1970. I was expecting to stay there another year but there were changes back in the European Bureau and I was apparently somebody's idea of somebody who could come back and run Eastern European stuff out of the Department.

Q: You were there essentially for four years weren't you?

BAKER: In the European Bureau, yes. And three years in the IO Bureau.

Q: What were your main concerns in the European Bureau?

BAKER: By that time my main concerns were helping to define and then carrying out the strategy which the NSC wanted to enunciate for our relationship with Eastern Europe as a region. They tasked the Department with coming up with a strategy paper, which I was more or less in charge of.

The general thrust of that paper was to encourage diversity in the Eastern European part of the Soviet Bloc. Diversity in either internal policy, such as the kind of economic reforms that were going on in Hungary or being rather tentatively tried in Poland, or with regard to foreign policy, which was apparent in Romania with the Ceausescu challenge to the Warsaw Pact requirements.

So we were then devising a series of carrots that would encourage these moves towards diversity and illustrate the kinds of advantages that might accrue to countries that were able gradually to express some more individuality in that situation and eventually qualifying for Most Favored Nation treatment as the Romanians and as the Hungarians, some time after my tenure, did, and as the Poles always had since 1956 or shortly after.

So there was a fair amount of activity as detente flowered in the early seventies. The US-Soviet detente, as it was called at that time, made it a little more possible for us to have these closer relationships with some Eastern European governments. In addition to Yugoslavia, of course, which was a case of its own, I spent a lot of time on Poland and Hungary.

Q: You mentioned doing a paper that the NSC wanted. The charge has been levied that Henry Kissinger, who was head of the NSC at the time, asked the State Department to do a whole series of papers on various things in order to keep the State Department so tied up that he could go ahead along with President Nixon and pursue foreign policy without having the Foreign Service and Co. bother them. Did you get any feel for that kind of thing?

BAKER: That might have been true in some cases, but it didn't correspond to my experience. One reason for that is that Eastern Europe for Kissinger and President Nixon were not a top of the line problem. If they wanted to tie up the State Department in order to conduct high diplomacy that might be on Vietnam or the Soviet Union or China or something like that. Kissinger and Nixon were not overflowing with energy that they wanted to expend in Eastern Europe, so I took Kissinger's request to elaborate a paper like this at face value and it seemed to me a logical thing to do. I thought Kissinger was correct to want to have a strategy to work from, to be a frame work for the day-to-day things that the State Department does, rather than just to do them and have the policy flow from doing them. I didn't feel that I was being hoodwinked and I did my best on this paper and it wound its way through the bureaucracy and survived the scrutiny of Kissinger and his people more or less intact. So I had some satisfaction in creating the strategy and then operating within it. And within it, Poland and Hungary and in another sense Romania, offered the greatest opportunities for carrying it out.

Q: At that period, how did you view Ceausescu and Romania at the time?

BAKER: Well, we didn't think that that was a very benign regime, but we were intrigued by the degree to which Ceausescu was willing to diverge from Soviet policy on a number of issues. Not only the United Nations but with respect with the Middle East, with relations with Israel, with European security discussions, some arms control issues, etc. It seemed to us that that diversity was worth encouraging.

On top of that, Nixon, for some reason or other, had struck a particular admiration society with Ceausescu, I think on an earlier visit he had made to Eastern Europe before he was elected. So Ceausescu played off of that. One of my tasks was to organize the reception of Ceausescu's 1973 state visit. That proved to be somewhat more than I bargained for because his advance people and his party wanted a whole lot of perks and things that we normally didn't provide. And particularly they wanted a very fancy joint statement or communique. The State Department didn't think much of that because they said if we do one of these for Ceausescu we will have to do one for every other guy who comes down the road. So let's try to avoid it.

But eventually the word came from the White House, “Yeah, if he wants it let's do it. Don't give away the store or anything, but let's go through the motions.” So I had to help sort of hammer out this statement of joint views with Ceausescu's people which was eventually propagated and immediately forgotten.

Q: Had the Czechs, as far as relations were concerned, by this time sort of sunk back into a deep freeze?

BAKER: Yes. During that whole period, 1970-74, when Czechoslovakia was one of the countries I had to deal with, I didn't spend much time on Czechoslovakia. There were no visits there until Secretary Rogers, for some reason, decided that that was a blank spot on his map and wanted to go. Somewhat over our objections he made a one-day stop there. We didn't think the relationship deserved that attention. So I didn't spend much time on Czechoslovakia during that period or on Bulgaria, which was a rather orthodox Communist

government. I had good country officers there and the kinds of issues and problems we had were quite within their capabilities.

Q: How about Hungary? Did that seem like a brighter promising spot?

BAKER: Yes. Probably in a way, the most promising spot because they were moving ahead on the economic reform which they had started in 1967. They were interested in better economic relationships, willing to conclude a claims agreement which we did, and willing to conclude a consular agreement which we did, and a cultural agreement. So they, along with the Poles, were the best example of what we could do within the strategy that I described. I had quite a few visits that I had to support there. I accompanied our Commerce Secretary there at one point.

Q: Okay, why don't we finish up Eastern Europe and next time I will catch you on the International Organizations, etc.

BAKER: The Hungarians were very cordial when we went there. They were particularly forthcoming in receiving our senior people.

Q: Were there any significant problems in Eastern Europe at the time?

BAKER: The most acute one that did result in a few National Security Council meetings, or at least Assistant Secretary level meetings, was the events at Gdansk in December, 1970. This was when Lech Walesa first emerged from the shipyards at Gdansk. There was violence there when the Polish government, still Gomulka's government at the time, used force there. There were people killed. It was a nasty show, but it was also a show of considerable discontent and seeds of what later became Solidarity.

I think that event had reverberations throughout the Eastern Bloc and into the Soviet Union. So it was something that deserved attention at a high level. I remember sitting in on

a couple of Senior Interagency Group meetings with Henry Kissinger and with Assistant Secretary for Europe Hillenbrand.

That was the main drama of that period. Otherwise there wasn't a lot of drama, just a lot of normal bilateral business.

Q: Talking about this, did we see this as anything, the Gdansk thing or was it sort of like the Berlin uprising, etc.?

BAKER: Well, it led to the end of Gomulka's reign there and produced a new Party leadership with Gierek. Under Gierek there was a more pragmatic approach both internally and internationally. Gierek launched on quite a program of getting loans and credits to develop Polish industry. So that involved our people in a closer relationship than had existed before the Gdansk events.

Q: In a way we saw this as the beginning of a change, did we?

BAKER: Yes, But in Poland it wasn't the first sign of it. Go back to 1956 and the events there during the Khrushchev period. You had Gomulka shutting that down for ten years and then finally driving people to some desperation which was reflected in Gdansk.

Q: Okay. Why don't we stop here and we'll pick up when you went off to the UN and got into IO next time.

We just got you out of DAS for Eastern Europe and we are going to the UNP, 1974-75. What particular phase of the UN were you working on?

BAKER: That was a period, as I recall, when we were getting a lot of grief in the UN from the developing world and from what was then the non-aligned group who formed a block at the UN that was able to vote a lot of things through the General Assembly. Some of the things that they voted through were not terribly congenial to US purposes. The result of that was that the Mission in New York frequently needed to have us instruct the field,

particularly governments in non-aligned countries that had some influence on the group, and where we had some influence, regarding the importance of some of the issues that came up.

For example, the Cubans and others were trying to get Puerto Rico dealt with as a colonial issue in the Committee of 24, which is where the colonial issues were taken up in the UN. I think it was also in the Fall of 1974 that the effort was made to give the PLO observer status at the General Assembly and for Arafat to come and speak at the General Assembly, which he did packing a pistol.

Those were sort of days of some defiance on the part of the non-aligned world of what they saw as an overly ambitious and, in the view of the left wing of the movement, even “imperialist,” United States foreign policy. And, of course, at the same time it was apparent that the effort in Vietnam was winding down not very successfully and that the American public was losing support for it rapidly. Then the revelations about Watergate were coming out about that time. So this was not a period when the US was able to stand as tall as it might wish in the halls of the United Nations.We were busy trying to head off these various resolutions and efforts in the UN. We had to pick and chose a little bit because a resolution in the General Assembly is really a statement of opinion and it doesn't have a lot of legal force most of the time. There is an occasional resolution that does have a semblance of legal force. Perhaps the most important thing that the General Assembly can do is to confer status and that is politically significant.

For example, if you are the PLO or a Southwest African revolutionary movement, and you want to get observer status at the UN and the Assembly gives it to you, you gain status that has political significance. The same is true of what was then the annual argument over North Korea...in the resolution on behalf of North Korea which, had it prevailed, would have given them status. So it was a struggle in a way over political status and a struggle in which we perceived the non-aligned movement and the developing world being often

led by a small group of radical states and not a group that was necessarily interested in developing an effective dialogue with the developed countries.

Q: Which were the preeminent radical states from our perspective?

BAKER: One of the principal organizers of the non-aligned movement at that period was Algeria. They had a fairly radical, at least in terms of international policy, regime at that time and were quite effective. Iraq was in there. The original founders of the non-aligned movement, Yugoslavia and India, were more on the moderate side, although on certain issues they were up there with the radicals too. They were certainly no help to us on Puerto Rico, Palestine and things like that. Of course, Cuba was one of the activist, radical states of the non-aligned movement and despite their, what we thought was quite apparent, alignment with the Soviet Bloc, they were able to participate in the non-aligned movement and host meetings.So it was our perception at that time that the non-aligned movement in its definition of non-alignment and in its choice of leadership, seemed to be stacked against us and closer to the foreign policy objectives of the Russians.

Q: What was your particular position in this 1974-75 period?

BAKER: I was Director of the Office of the UN Political Affairs.

Q: In Washington?

BAKER: In Washington.

Q: Then from 1975-77 you moved up a notch. Is that right?

BAKER: Yes. In the middle of 1975 the then Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, Bill Buffum, left the Service and became Under Secretary General of the UN. Kissinger, who was then Secretary of State, replaced him with Sam Lewis, who had been Deputy Director for Policy Planning under Winston Lord. I think Sam had

distinguished himself in that job and had gotten the Secretary's attention and confidence, so he made Sam Assistant Secretary.

When Sam started looking at how he would organize the Bureau, I said, “Well, I have stayed on a little longer in Washington to do this UNP job and if I am going to stay on still longer, I would want to be a little closer to your management team here.” Sam seemed to respond to that and asked me to be one of his deputies in the Bureau and particularly for the political issues.

Q: You were there during the waning days of the Nixon Administration, before Ford came. How about Henry Kissinger? What was your impression of Henry Kissinger and the United Nations? How did he view it and use it?

BAKER: I think Henry Kissinger was quite aware of the United Nations as a political instrument that could be used for political purposes. And also aware that in that period it seemed to be used more against our purposes than in support of them. Nevertheless, he was quite sensitive to the way we would approach other governments about issues in the UN. Frequently he would want personally to look at the kind of instructions that we did for approaching say, the government of Algeria, or the government of Zaire, or the government of Sri Lanka, or the government of Yugoslavia, whoever we thought we had some influence with that might get us a better result in the non-aligned area. I think he felt that there were often other issues that were important with those countries and he wanted to be sure that these approaches were properly couched. At various points he would hold them up for several days or longer until he could personally review them.

Q: It wasn't a blanket operation in the way it some times is?

BAKER: No. He took a very close interest in that. I don't know whether he was a great fan of the United Nations, but he certainly recognized its psychological and political importance.

Q: As a deputy assistant secretary what was your particular beat?

BAKER: All political issues. Not only in the UN Security Council and General Assembly but also political issues that would arise in the technical agencies, like the World Health Organization or UNESCO. So I got drawn into the issue of whether or not we left UNESCO and the issue of trying to get status for the PLO or trying to denigrate Israel in the technical agencies as well.

One of the principal things that happened while I was in that role was that Pat Moynihan, who Kissinger and Ford had selected to follow John Scali at the UN. It was at the Assembly in 1975 when the “Zionism-equals-Racism” resolution was passed. Moynihan was infuriated by that resolution. I think he felt that it was much too a broad brush characterization of the Zionist movement to call it racist. Of course, he was a long time citizen of New York with what some people thought political ambitions there...

Q: We might mention that he is presently a Senator from New York.

BAKER: The fact that he took umbrage at that particular resolution was not surprising and already viewed as being not only proper indignation for the UN representative but something with perhaps a longer view ahead. At the end of that Assembly he fired off a fairly vigorous telegram to Kissinger about what we ought to do about being browbeaten at the UN by the developing countries and called for using more American leverage bilaterally vis-a-vis these countries that were giving us excessive grief in the United Nations.

So Kissinger responded to that by asking the IO Bureau to come up with a method of doing that and Sam asked me to develop that. We then did develop a method for doing that and that was one of the principal features of that job I had there, developing and operating that system.

What we did was to identify a small number of issues in the General Assembly that we thought were important enough to make a case over to some of the non-aligned governments. We carefully developed how to present that case. Then we started a campaign of briefing our embassies in the non-aligned world as to why those issues were important and how one might present them. And on top of that we undertook a program to conduct a personal briefing of every ambassador when he came in on consultation in IO about these issues, because it was our feeling that traditionally ambassadors and missions who were performing functions primarily in a bilateral context tended to discount somewhat the instructions that they got about these multilateral relationships. If they hadn't served in multilateral organizations and didn't see the significance of some of these things we felt they probably were sort of going through the motions when they were instructed to carry out these things. And the governments that they were speaking to probably sensed that they were going through the motions and didn't take it terribly seriously. So we wanted to upgrade the quality of the presentations, upgrade the level at which they were made and add the significant element by actually stating that these issues were important enough to negatively affect certain aspects of our bilateral relations.

Of course, the press immediately began to say that we were threatening small countries with our foreign assistance program or with our food aid and things like that. That we were trying to starve people into submission, etc.

We were careful not to really make those kinds of threats. The implication was that we might reach that point if our concerns were not given some attention, but we never instructed ambassadors to say, “If you don't do this than we will cut this AID program or lower their priority on this commodity loan, etc.” But the implication was that we could do that and we would look at it. And that was enough to get a lot of people in the development community worked up about this effort.

However, we persisted with that for those couple of years. At the Assembly of 1976 and the Assembly that we were preparing of 1977, we did reasonably well in protecting

ourselves and defending ourselves in the General Assembly on those selected key issues because we did manage to persuade friendly nations in the non-aligned area that they were important enough to us to be worth their attention.

Q: Did President Ford play any role in this?

BAKER: I didn't get the sense that President Ford was particularly involved personally in this exercise. Kissinger certainly was and he was supportive of it. I think Kissinger liked to use power and leverage to defend and accomplish US purposes. And he wanted to use it with a certain amount of sophistication, and that's what we tried to do, to use American power and influence in defense of our interests at the United Nations...

Q: Just a little about Sam Lewis. He is head of Policy Planning right now, he has come back. How did he operate when he was in charge of International Organizations?

BAKER: I thought Sam was a good leader. He listened very carefully to his principal office directors and deputies. He knew which issues were the ones that he, himself, had to focus on and decide, and he knew which ones he could delegate to his management group. So I was quite comfortable working with Sam. We kept in close touch on things that might be sensitive or get the Secretary excited. But generally I had the necessary latitude to do what I needed to do.

Q: How about relations between Lewis and Moynihan, when Moynihan was there, or did they overlap?

BAKER: Yes, they did overlap and I think they had reasonably good relations, but Moynihan felt that he was a member of the Cabinet and that he needed to say his piece to the Secretary and the President, so I don't think he took a lot of guidance from Sam.

Q: You moved from that to going out to Rome from 1977-79 doing what?

BAKER: Well, I went out to Rome as the US representative to the food aid agencies.

Q: FAO?

BAKER: Yes, the FAO; the World Food Program; the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which was a new bank that was set up this time designed to draw in all that Middle Eastern oil money that had come out of the huge fortunes oil producing countries made out of the energy crisis in 1973; and then the World Food Council which was created because of the concern that population was growing and hunger was growing in the world.

All that came about because of the change in administration. In 1977, the Carter Administration came in and appointed a new Assistant Secretary for IO. He wanted, obviously, new deputies who would be with him for a four year period so those of us who were there were up for the usual scramble to try to get embassies and equivalent posts abroad because we knew we would not be kept on, didn't expect to be kept on because when administrations change they always assume that if you worked for the previous administration at that level that you were somehow on the other team.

I guess I was somewhat marked by certain parts of Washington public opinion because I had been the organizer of the campaign to improve our results in the General Assembly and some people in the Carter camp thought that was hardball and the whole Carter foreign policy was much more North/South oriented at the outset. Eventually, with Afghanistan and arms control, it went back to its East/West axis. But it came in with a North/South flavor and human rights, etc. So, I guess I was seen by some of those people as part of the bad old Kissinger team. That didn't help me a whole lot in coming out of the change with a big time assignment abroad. And I was also disadvantaged by the fact that the Assistant Secretary asked me to stay on initially, although I knew it wouldn't be for terribly long. But it was long enough that it kept me from competing for some of the posts I might otherwise have had a run at.

Anyway, I wound up working for the new Administration for about six or seven months as deputy and then getting to be chief of the small mission in Rome to the food aid agencies.But it was not an ambassadorial post, it was elevated to a ministerial post and, of course, next time around because a Congresswoman was interested in the job, it became an ambassadorial post.

Q: Fenwick.

BAKER: Yes. It was a pleasant place to be. I had served in Rome before, as you know, and I like Rome, spoke Italian and the job had a lot of autonomy. I knew the ambassador well, Dick Gardner. He was instrumental in my being nominated out there. Although he was very interested in the United Nations, he soon discovered that the Italian scene was going to take his full time, so he was pleased to have me do everything that had to be done at those international organizations—to represent the United States in their governing bodies, etc.

Q: What were the prime concerns when you were there?

BAKER: Curiously enough, although these agencies were primarily aimed at the problems of the developing world, and although the Carter Administration had a strong orientation towards North/South relations in the developing world, my instructions had to do mostly with holding down budgetary growth and keeping the organizations' costs from ballooning.The principal thing that tended to make them balloon was that the Director General, who had been chosen by third world majority and was a Lebanese, was busily cultivating his constituency by creating a program of technical assistance grants, which was very much under his own personal management. This program was laid on to the regular budget and tended to cause it to grow. The slogan that I was instructed to work for was zero real growth. It was my job to organize the principal contributor countries to the FAO as a group to act in the governing bodies of the FAO to control cost. So that made me about as popular as a skunk at a picnic. The Director General very soon identified me

as his principal nemesis in town and although I had polite relations with him and always did the right thing from a protocol standpoint, it was a fairly stiff relationship over those years.

In the World Food Program, it was a little bit different because that program does not have a regular budget with assessed contributions. It operates on the basis of voluntary contributions from the members, and the United States, having originally suggested that organization back in the days when McGovern was finding ways to move our large agricultural surpluses in constructive ways, was a major contributor of food, of wheat, powdered milk and flour. The whole idea was to try to get those commodities to countries that needed them because they were hungry but then to distribute them to hungry people who did work in work projects of a development nature. So the food-for-work program was a significant part of that organization's work.The program ran into the usual hazards of how do you land and protect and handle food in tropical areas in developing countries and keep track of it and cut down on waste, spoilage and pilfering, etc. But it had dedicated people working for it. The US AID was the principal agency back in Washington that was responsible for our input into that agency.

AID was also significant in IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which we helped get started out there in 1977.

So it was that sort of work. I didn't feel that I was at the cutting edge of American foreign policy exactly...

Q: But you were helping to get food to people which may have been of more benefit.

BAKER: It was interesting. One of the things that I pointed out to the Department was that I would be more effective in the governing bodies if I had actually been to the field and seen the projects and observed them myself and could speak about their benefits

or weaknesses. So I made various trips to Tunisia, Sudan, Egypt, Malaysia, Nepal, Bangladesh, to look at projects.

Q: Then you came back in 1979 and went to Refugee Affairs.

BAKER: Yes. While I was in that job, and I thought I would probably be there for three years, the Carter Administration, largely as the result of the huge outflow of boat refugees from Vietnam, decided to create a new structure for management of refugee flows and intake into the United States. They created a bureau in the State Department and also a government-wide coordinator who would coordinate not only State but HEW and other agencies concerned with the refugee problem.

Carter named Dick Clark, who had been defeated as a Senator from Iowa in 1978, as coordinator. I think there was probably a double strategy there. One was that Carter knew that in the 1980 election the struggle would start, as usual, in Iowa. Clark could be an asset for anyone who wanted to run for the Democratic nomination and I think Carter was concerned that he might have some opposition so he named Clark to that position, I guess to be sure that he either was neutralized or, if he did do anything politically it would be in support of the President.

Clark was more or less authorized to try to build this new structure and recruit a director of the bureau, which is an assistant secretary level position. For some reason or other my name was given to him and he interviewed a number of people. Eventually he offered me the job. Given the level of the job I thought I ought to accept. I came back with some regrets from Rome, which I like, to take this bear of a job with a staff that had been partially selected by Clark, and a bunch of people of varying skills that other bureaus had been asked to contribute.

So then I began to address these problems primarily of Vietnam refugees who we were receiving at the rate of 14,000 a month. We had to contract with religious organizations to try to settle these people and find them jobs, etc. The flow into Malaysia and Thailand

was such that those countries were beginning to talk about turning them back, pushing them out to sea. So we had to move quickly with the help of the Philippine government to establish a camp in the Philippines where we could take the overflow because there were more coming out than could fit under our approved 14,000 a month level. If we didn't take them off the hands of the Malaysians and the Thais, then they would push boats back out to sea where they were victims of piracy, and what all.

So I started to work at that and had only been at it for three or four months when Clark told us that he was resigning to work for the nomination of Ted Kennedy. That didn't go down very well with the White House. Meantime the crisis on the Cambodian border was taking place because the Khmer Rouge had carried out such a brutal policy in Cambodia that a lot of Cambodians had gone up into Thailand. The Thais did not want to acknowledge them or accept them as refugees so they set up this rather curious non-refugee refuge along the Thai-Cambodian border which then the Administration asked us to deal with.

I thought that this was the ideal type of problem for the disaster relief agency that the AID people have, but no, it had to be done by the Refugee Bureau, a struggling, understaffed organization. So our initial efforts to cope with that with one or two guys trying to respond to this huge problem were not terribly impressive. That fact, plus Clark's departure put me into a bad spot and the White House decided that when Clark went, all the senior people he had appointed should also go.

Q: So once again you were attacked.

BAKER: A new squad came in and they asked me to stay on in a somewhat unclear role so that there would be some continuity in what we were doing. I did this for a few months, but it was pretty awkward.

Then I was asked to fill in as deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. I took that opportunity with some relief and performed that function for most of the rest of 1980. That was an interesting job. That was a job where you plan and edit the

product which goes to the Secretary and President. A range of intelligence products. I was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Current Intelligence. I enjoyed that.

Q: Did you get a feeling for what Carter particularly wanted?

BAKER: One of the things that the Carter White House was obsessing over during that period was, of course, the hostages in Iran because in that winter, November 1979, they had been seized. When I came into that job in INR, I think it was around March 1, 1980, it was on everybody's mind so that was what the White House was heavily concerned with. The President was making statements every day about the nature of our concern.

In the meantime other things were being prepared. One of the things we were asked to do in INR was to prepare our considered judgment as to what would be the reaction in the world to an effort to rescue the hostages by force and we did that. It was not a very edifying result, I guess, particularly considering the fact that at the same time, unknown to us, plans were going ahead for the desert rescue.

Q: Which was abortive. What was your judgment of what world opinion would be?

BAKER: Pretty negative, mainly because of the concern that the cost would be high.

Q: You are talking about human life.

BAKER: Yes. And as you know, the Secretary, himself...

Q: Cyrus Vance.

BAKER: ...had serious reservations about that decision and it was ultimately the decision that was made over his objections that eventually led to his resignation.

Q: When the Carter Administration left in 1981, then you also moved on didn't you?

BAKER: Yes. At the end of the Carter Administration, because the position I had been in in INR was filling in for a guy who was on detail up at the Council on Foreign Relations. When he came back, I left that position and was asked by Donald McHenry, who had taken Andy Young's place at the UN, when Andy got a little too cheerful with the PLO, to come up to the General Assembly and help handle all the economic and social issues, including refugee issues as minister-counselor in the Mission.

He knew and I knew that this would be a one Assembly affair. I didn't want to move to New York. So I went up there and spent that Assembly in New York coming home on weekends. I was working such issues as the great North-South bargain project that the developing countries were pressing with the developed countries. That was a center piece of the stuff we were doing up there.

Q: The idea being that the North was rich and the South was poor basically in world terms. How could the North transfer basically it wealth to the South.

BAKER: After the Reagan election, the North-South negotiation was sort of dismissed out of hand by Reagan and Jeane Fitzpatrick and tended to sort of go away. We just stopped dealing on that because Jean took a much harder line vis-a-vis the third world.

So that was what I was doing when the election took place. I had no special in with the Reagan Administration and no great enthusiasm for the Reagan approach to the world. One of the reasons was that, in the course of the previous five years, I had been further schooled in the significance of multilateral diplomacy and the Reagan approach to the world, particularly at the outset, was a unilateral one with rather little space given to the views of our allies or of multilateral organizations. I had a hard time seeing exactly what kind of comfortable place I could find at a high level in that concept. So I was pleased enough to be invited to go to the War College and join the faculty there and that is what I did basically for the rest of my Foreign Service career.

Q: Just a couple of questions about the War College. What was your impression at this particular period of time of how the military viewed foreign affairs and State Department as you saw their reactions at the War College?

BAKER: I became a great admirer of the War College and what happened at the War College. I was on the faculty for three years and then another year in a National Defense research project writing a book for them.

While I was on the faculty, what impressed me was that you have a lot of very able military officers coming in there beginning to read about answers and think about foreign affairs issues and carrying with them a fair amount of freight about State Department and civilian personnel in the conduct of our foreign policy. Generally their orientation was that none of those people were really vigorously enough defending American interests.

A lot of these guys had been out in Vietnam and had put their lives at risk in a cause which eventually the government and the public didn't support. That was a bitter memory that a lot of them were carrying. Some of that bitterness, I think, slopped over in their attitude towards the civilian hierarchy. So there had to be each year with each new group the process of coming to understand and appreciate the civilian students, as about a quarter of them were civilians with around 20 or so from the State Department and other agencies as well. These civilians, of course, were carefully distributed among the seminar groups so that there was never any group that was strictly military.

You began to see that people began to relate to each other in a less stereotypical way. I think, also, it was instructive for the civilians. By that time in our history we were getting a lot of civilians who had never served in the military coming up in the Foreign Service and they had some of their own stereotypes about the military. And there were always a couple of guys from the military in the War College class who fully bore out the stereotype...sort of the “nuke them” type. But those were exceptions and aberrations. I think most of the

civilians came to realize that these were very sensible, practical, and dedicated people who were eager to move on to a higher level of understanding.

A certain coming-to-understand-each-other took place in this process which I felt was extremely important for preparing the next generation of strategic leadership for the country. So I continue to think it is a very valuable institution. I think it is quite well run and that the services have good people there, both on the faculty and the student body, although the Navy is a little bit more inclined to send its best guys up to the Newport Naval War College, I think, because they feel the military content of the War College program is not as much Navy as they might like, but still the guys who come from Navy are good people. But I would say in my experience there that the higher achievers and performers on the military side tended to be Army or Air Force guys.

Q: Then you retired in 1986?

BAKER: Yes. During the last year I was there I was writing a book, but I was also looking around for second career opportunities and eventually came across this one.

Q: So you are here at the Atlantic Council?

BAKER: Yes. I left the Service at the end of February, 1986 and joined the Council on the first of March. I have been here as a consultant ever since, most of the time practically as a full time consultant. But at those times when I have not been able to raise enough funds to make the Council comfortable, I have been less than a full time consultant.

Q: So really you have to raise money?

BAKER: I have to raise money to run the programs I run. If I don't raise enough money to run the programs I run and cover my salary, I work less. So I have over the past seven years occasionally done work for the government. I worked a little bit in the asylum program, and a while in the intelligence community staff. But for the most part I have

worked here and now they have just asked me to be a vice president here as a full time employee. So as of October 1, I have worked on a more permanent status.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much. I really appreciate this.

BAKER: You are welcome.

End of interview